

Occasional Papers



"I believed,
and therefore have
I spoken"
2 Cor. 4:13

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Preface

MANY Missourians as well as others in Christendom will rejoice in the publication of these *Occasional Papers*.

The strong and long-stated case against the Historical-Critical Method had to be updated to speak to those phases of it currently accented in Missouri's discussions.

In the *Papers* a group of scholars, addressing themselves to specific historic occasions and in one instance at least not to the Historical-Critical Method per se, essentially focus on that method and its weaknesses.

Without planning it, each of them, in his own way and from his own perspective for the occasion on which he wrote, reinforced the line of argumentation the others used. As a result, these pages speak with one voice.

Together, moreover, they forcefully present the case against using the Historical-Critical Method as it has not been presented, to our knowledge, so persuasively in our generation.

Because they have so thoroughly mastered their subject, they write with the clarity and simplicity laymen will appreciate. Here and there some paragraphs and, perhaps, some sections become burdened with the scholarly apparatus and language necessary to state the case against the Historical-Critical Method in a manner acceptable to other scholars. But for most part, these men tellingly put this case in language all can follow.

Discussing the role of the interpreter, for example, one author quotes Walther,

"If the possibility that the Scripture contained the least error were admitted, it would become the business of man to sift the truth from the error. That places man over Scripture, and Scripture is no longer the source and norm of doctrine."

THE author comments about an assertion in the faculty document's *Discussion Nine*, "Quite startling is . . . (the) assertion that 'the fundamental principles of interpretation' including 'Scripture interprets itself' are not laid down in the Scriptures. 'Furthermore, these rules are not unique to the study of the Scriptures, but apply to the interpretation of any ancient document.' This is completely un-Lutheran and untheological. Lutheran theology has always insisted on Scripture's self-interpretation because of its unique status as a sole authority."

Another author comments on another error about the interpreter inherent in the Historical-Critical Method, "The interpreter determines what is to be believed in the Bible. He denies that the text of the Scriptures is open to the understanding of Christians who do not have his expertise or technical competence."

The kind of *uncertainty*—and its results—to which the use of the Historical-Critical Method leads is strikingly stated,

"It is nonsense to claim, as some do, that 'faith' is strengthened when historical-critical methods or other naturalistic assumptions have made it impossible to be sure any longer just what the Bible teaches or the 'Gospel' is. Faith is not destroyed by having an objective, reliable basis, but precisely by not having one."

"If the church is not at all sure what it believes and teaches, confuses Law and Gospel—can this not be confusing and detrimental to the faithful?"

This author devastatingly notes the limitations of this method,

"Pilate was incapable of applying any other standards to Calvary than the criteria of human observation . . . A purely objective and, for his day, scientific evaluation misled him by keeping from him the full dimensions of meaning of what had taken place. By definition, the Historical-Critical Method is scientific. As such it can get little beyond Pilate."

ANOTHER author notes that those who use the Historical-Critical Method want to be freed of the "details" of Bible stories. That, he points out, sounds harmless. He continues, "But what is a 'detail?' Anything, it seems, one wants to get rid of."

Later he carries this line of thought a step further, "How odd that the very people who talk most about the 'mighty acts' of the 'God who acts,' then reduce acts and facts to meanings (as they play fast and loose with the 'details' of the Bible—ed)."

He concludes, forcefully, "It is not only irrational but sacrilegious to pretend to trust His Word in 'large matters,' while suspecting the reliability of His Word in 'small matters'..."

A last quote, this about the great critic, Delitzsch. He had heard his famous Old Testament professor lecture on Deuteronomy and was disturbed about the implications of what he had heard. Later he privately blurted to him, "So then the 5th Book of Moses is what is called a forgery?" The professor responded, " 'For God's sake! That's no doubt true, but one can't say a thing like that!' This word, especially his 'for God's sake!' keeps ringing in my ears till the present day . . . For I have never understood why one should not, in such serious matters, also express that which is true."

If these few samples have whet your appetite for this series of *Occasional Papers*, which form a significant contribution to the literature on the Historical-Critical Method as well as fascinating writing, do read on!

All of these pieces on these pages, short and long, more than live up to the samples!

May God bless them as they go forth to speak to a church in crisis on the most critical issue she now faces!

In His Name,

The Editorial Group

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Criticism Of The Bible

EVERY historical investigation, whether Biblical or extra-Biblical, which substantiates or sheds light on the events recorded in Scripture, is a proper use of human reasoning power.

Every use of man's critical faculties (analysis, distinction, synthesis) which enlists reason in the service of faith in order to search the Scriptures for meaning and effective proclamation, serves a good purpose.

But some men have used their historical studies to conclude that persons and events, miracles and conversations recorded in the Bible are not historical. For example, that Adam and Eve or the Patriarchs had not been flesh and blood persons; that such accounts as the Fall of Man, aspects of the Exodus, the giving of the Law of Moses, the conquest of Canaan, the miracles of Jesus, and even His bodily resurrection from the grave have no basis in fact.

Their critical investigations have led them to discredit such Biblical and confessional teachings as the total depravity of man, the wrath of God, eternal punishment, the existence of angels, the Virgin Birth of Christ, His divinity, and the substitutionary atonement.

Such historical-critical principles, leading to such conclusions, are called a "method" when applied consistently. This method cannot be considered merely a theologically neutral tool or technique of interpretation, comparable to textual criticism, grammar, or lexicography. None of these propose to pass a value judgment on the historical substance of revelation. The use of the Historical-Critical Method represents the judgment of the exegete who does not think the Bible is the Word of God. Instead, he treats the Bible as the literary remains of a religious people.

More precisely, the Historical-Critical Method is that method of interpreting Scripture which uses the criteria of scientific historical investigation to analyse the sacred text in terms of language, literary form, and redaction criticism for the purpose of determining how much of the historical content of the events described in Scripture can be recaptured and authenticated. It is assumed that the text of Scripture was the product of a long period of development and reflects the religious experiences and projections of particular communities.

Let's Avoid a Misunderstanding

WE must hasten to offer an important distinction at this point. Since the Word of God was revealed in history, its historical context is also a reality with which the interpreter must cope. But the historical context of the Word of God is very far from being a legitimate criterion for the determination of the Scriptures, or its content, as the Word of God. The Scriptures are the Word of God because they make that claim, which is validated in the hearts of believers by the self-authenticating power of the Holy Spirit.

It has become fashionable in some "moderate" circles of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to blame former President Francis Pieper for the rigorous formulations in our synodical literature that the Scriptures are the Word of God. While it is true that Dr. Pieper faithfully upheld this teaching during his lifetime, it is simply untrue that he initiated or invented such doctrinal formations for the LC-MS. Some of those formulations were made by Luther himself and other fathers of the Reformation.

It will not do at all to denounce every one as a "biblicist" who confesses with the Lutheran Book of Concord that the Scriptures are the Word of God. If the alternative is suggested that the Scriptures merely contain the Word of God, which the exegete must find and lift out for his audience, then we should indeed "revisit" Marburg in order to correct Luther who insisted against Zwingli that the words of institution of the Lord's Supper must be taken literally and realistically. Why? Because the Scriptures are the Word of God.

THE vocabulary of denunciation employed against faithfully orthodox theologians is gradually becoming tiresome. Even the most patient cross-bearer among our readers must eventually see that "biblicist" or "fundamentalist" are merely cheap caricatures of faithful interpretations of Scripture as the Word in the sense of its classical Lutheran formulations. But to speak the truth in love is unlikely to stop the propagandist against Lutheran orthodoxy.

Ancient classical writers, such as Plato and Aristotle, show how literature like that of Homer or Hesiod was analysed and criticized. In a general sense, a critical reading of literature, history, political correspondence, treaties, legal contracts, and the like, was well known and understood by civilized people from earliest recorded times. But in modern times the term "criticism," especially when associated with the interpretation of the Scriptures, has acquired a distinctly philosophical content.

Immanuel Kant invented the term "criticism" about 200 years ago. It was his name for that discipline by which men, on commonly accepted bases, determined the "sources, area, and limits" (*Quellen, Umfang und Grenzen*) of human knowledge independent of experience. Included were Scripture as well as all other religious claims of divine revelation. Kant said criticism could be done by investigating the subjective origins of such knowledge claims in our ways of knowing. The commonly accepted bases for determining human ways of knowing were essentially empirical. But German academics preferred the term *wissenschaftlich*, more inclusive than empirical or scientific.

Items on the Critical Agenda

CRITICISM became the accepted intellectual activity of examining all theoretical and practical knowledge claims for possible "contradictory content" or errors. Criticism insists on rational coherence. If a statement can be shown to have a "meaning gap" or *lacuna* of information, it is incoherent. When this view becomes foundational policy for the interpretation of the Scriptures, or the "hidden agenda" of the exegete, he can do more or less what he wants to do with a text, even though he may claim to be *textgebunden*—bound to the text.

As a discipline, criticism must assume a comprehensive policy of distrust and unbelief toward all "metaphysical sentences" whose origin and content do not fit the essential conditions of the human capacity to know. Accordingly, critics have argued since Kant, meaning is possible only within the limits of human or rational understanding. Initially, representatives of criticism quite proudly called themselves "rationalists" in distinction to their opponents whom they sometimes called "superstitious supernaturalists" or "dogmatists."

To say it quickly, Kant's rationalism meant: Nothing is to be accepted as true, unless the human mind understands and masters it. For that reason, Kant also argued, human thinking moves from dogmatism to skepticism, and finally to criticism. The liberated man, for example, the professor who wants to live in freedom from the shackles of Christian orthodoxy, must become a critic of all religious and secular orthodoxies.

Criticism, in effect, claims to save man's religious sensibilities, aesthetic satisfactions, and the beauty and comfort of the religious imagination by destroying the received historical content of his Christian faith. It is done, first of all, by relativizing the historical data of the Scriptures. Such data as Gen. 1-11, which do not fit the criteria of historical-scientific evaluation, are designated as "mythological."

It should be noted, perhaps, that criticism of the Bible is rooted in Kantian epistemology. It would be incorrect, therefore, to conclude that criticism is no more than skeptical comment and analysis of the Bible on the order of Spinoza's *Tractatus*. Kant is far more than merely destructive. He offered an epistemology to justify a new way of thinking.

Revision of the Critical Agenda

AFTER 1860, revisionists of Kant's philosophy moved against the "poverty of empiricism" by claiming that Kantian "criticism" is not merely a critical introduction or preparation for metaphysical efforts, but actually sets forth the principles by which all knowledge is to be understood. It is significant that the disciples of Kant built their thinking upon a theory or notion of subjectivism. This meant, again to say it quickly, that truth is what a person feels it is within his heart. The *Wahrheitsgefuehl*, (feeling of the truth) is a dynamic of the moral law within man. Schleiermacher was among the earliest systematizers of the Christian faith according to man's *religioeses Empfinden* (religious feeling or Christian ego.) He had started out as a fine classical scholar and had learned to respect the text. In his treatment of the New Testament he also felt *textgebunden*, but that did not prevent his Christian ego to do more or less whatever he wanted to do with his texts.

Criticism and Our Founding Fathers

C CRITICISM of the Bible was well known to the founding fathers of Synod. After all, they were the product of the theological faculties of German universities. C. F. W. Walther explicitly described the destructive power of his "enlightened," liberal, and critical teachers. He had understood them well. He knew that their interpretations of the Bible had been utterly subjective—"man-made."

It is really remarkable that Concordia Publishing House no longer sells Walther's *The True Visible Church*. Readers who have access to it should carefully examine Theses XVI-XIX (pp. 66-119, Mueller trans., CPH 1961). If the reader follows Walther's thought, he will not be able to agree with "moderate" Lutheran exegetes who say they can interpret the Bible best with the tools of historical-critical methodologies under the control of "Lutheran presuppositions." The reader should also be warned in advance that "cheap unbelief," like "cheap grace," can make of "Lutheran presuppositions" just about anything it pleases.

The Assumed Principle of Criticism

W HY must a warning be given? Because the mandatory element of Biblical criticism is the assumed principle that the content of the Biblical tradition can be understood only after a differentiating and evaluative investigation to test its credibility (*Tragfaehigkeit*). In other words, the Biblical content

on principle does not authenticate itself to the believer, but must be "objectively" inspected and judged. Who performs this sort of testing? The critical interpreter, of course. He claims the right and the competence to do it properly.

What else is assumed hereby in principle? The interpreter determines what is to be believed in the Bible. He denies that the text of the Scriptures is open to the understanding of Christians who do not have his expertise or technical competence. The Bible is really open only to the exegetical expert, and for him autonomous human thinking is *normative* for Biblical interpretation (F. Baumgaertel). The critical interpreter therefore denies what Luther's reformation efforts affirmed: That the Bible is the Word of God; that Scripture interprets Scripture; that it is open to every Christian.

The general assumption of the critical interpreter that Scripture is not the Word of God, but merely contains it among many and varied religious experiences of the communities of the Biblical books should be clearly perceived. Given this point of departure, the historical-critical interpreter concludes that it is the work of the critic of the Bible to find a divine message, sort out its meaning, and offer it to his audience.

How Criticism Is Done

HOW does he do this? He begins with the task of "reconstructing the original text" on the basis of his analysis of extant manuscript copies of the text. Although textual criticism has not achieved a final form of the original text, the claim is advanced that the "emendations" and "conjectures" of the textual critics have produced the best Biblical text possible in the absence of the original manuscripts. This work of textual criticism is not in itself offensive. In fact, it is the only critical work on the text of the Bible which may be undertaken with Lutheran presuppositions of faith.

Literary criticism, however, is something very different. The reader who is not a devotee of criticism must first make a distinction between an appreciation of a text, pericope, or an entire book according to its literary form for the purpose of effective preaching and exposition, and the use of literary criticism to determine the meaning and authoritative communication of a text.

The former is a practice at least as old as the tower of Babel. There is no record that people ever had serious difficulties distinguishing between song and speech, poetry and prose (except in 17th century French comedy). Ancient writers have made a great deal of comment on style and literary forms. This is familiar to the student of classical literature who has read the analyses of Plato, Aristotle, or Longinus. Even historians like Herodotus and Thucydides give much attention to the analysis of literary forms in their comment on the oratory of their heroes. Nothing new here.

But the modern understanding of literary criticism, derived from Kant's notion of criticism, is something very different. It must operate with the basic assumption that the Bible is nothing more than a venerated product of the literary-religious activities of the human race.

Religion Is the Product of the Worshipping Community

THE assertion of this heading will sound harshly in the ears of Christian believers. Convinced, as Luther said, that the Scriptures "did not grow on earth," they cannot accept statements, such as the following by Prof. John Knox (*Faith and Criticism*, Abingdon, 1952, p. 26): "Scholars of the Old Testament and of the New have placed beyond any doubt that the books of the Bible sprang out of the experience of the religious community, Hebrew-Jewish and Christian; that

the Bible did not create the church but was in effect an expression—the supreme literary expression—of the church's life. For this reason it should be studied and can be understood only in the light of the character, interests, experiences, needs, and circumstances of the historical community whose life it reflects."

If the content of the Bible is no more than a record (whatever the literary forms) of the activities and experiences of a religious people whose cultus is the sum of emotional-psychological-intellectual-artistic projection of their common life, then we have adopted the essential argument of Feuerbach, Marx, and Freud: the religion of a people is a projection of their needs, desires, and hopes—or, to say it ideologically, religion is the opium of the masses.

To be sure, Dr. Knox wrote, while "Christianity is by definition a religion for which history is of supreme concern; a historical event is indeed the very source and center of it . . . the basis of our assurance of it [the resurrection of Jesus] is not documentary but experiential" (p. 25 & 41). This is a viewpoint which Schleiermacher would have found congenial and which Luther would have abhorred. The Reformer knew that feelings of assurance may be the products of the Christian faith; they are never the foundation of faith, which is Jesus Christ, His Person and His work, to whom the prophets and apostles also infallibly witness.

Who Says What Is Historical?

SINCE the Biblical documents are not the Word of God, but may contain some word of God in its records of the religious experiences of a worshipping community, we can rely on them only, Dr. Knox writes, ". . . as examined and tested and interpreted by the same methods appropriate in the study of documents generally when used as sources for historical facts. And to say this is in turn to say that any answers we give to these purely historical questions must be given tentatively" (p. 48). Why "tentatively?" Because Christian faith "involves not the slightest measure of commitment on such facts about Jesus' life as we are now discussing" (p. 49).

It is important to understand the close relationship between literary criticism of the Bible and the comparative study of religion which is known to be consistently naturalistic in assumptions and guiding principles. Accordingly, all supernatural elements in a religion are magical projections, psychological defense mechanisms, cultic safety valves for tribal emotions, aesthetic projections of the artistic proclivities of a community, sanctions for its social bonds, the religious confirmation of a priestly elite, or the means for the continuation of a dominant political power.

A modern comparative study of the history of religions and modern sociology of religion treat all religions as equally false and as equally useful to the scholar, politician, or ancient Caesar. Religion is seen as merely a recurring facet of human existence. It is to be analysed and its potentialities calculated for their possible effects on the community of those who profess to believe its claims.

Criticism Incompatible with Lutheran Confessional Principles

CONTEMPORARY critical exegetes among us, who claim to be obedient to Lutheran confessional principles of interpretation, do not follow C. F. W. Walther in their work of interpreting the Word of God. First, they say, they must determine the sources of the Biblical material. Second, they must decide what it meant for the people who heard it or for whom it was written. Third, they must exhibit its present meaning. Finally, they can proceed to abstract the Word of

God from a pericope, provided they can find a Word of God in it.

Since it does not matter, as Prof. John Knox wrote, whether Biblical facts or data are true or not, such interpreters are interested in speculating on how the text functioned in that community in which it was first heard or used. Since this notion of the "function of the text" has nothing much to do with the truth of a text, contemporary Christians are not bound to the use of a text as it was understood in the community to which it was originally addressed. For example, St. Paul denied the office of the public ministry to women. That was the function and meaning of the text then, they say. But it does not authoritatively bind Christians today to the same function or meaning. The point defended here by the Lutheran critical exegete is the relativity of the meaning of revelation.

The importance of such critical exegetical procedures or method becomes clear for the believing Christian when he finds out that all miracles and all prophecy (specifically Messianic prophecy), according to these historical-critical principles of procedure, became miracles and prophecies in the minds of a later audience long after the event. Or, to say it more sharply, the authentic Biblical material does not contain miracle accounts and predictive prophecy contrary to what we know in history or the natural sciences. Rather, such stories should be read as mere "retrodictive" interpretations made by the later religious community long after the presumed original event for the purpose of supporting or confirming their present beliefs.

Witnesses Against Historical Criticism of the Bible

PERHAPS it will be easiest for the orthodox Christian to observe for himself the destructive force of critical Biblical interpretation. Prof. Ernst Kaesemann of Tuebingen wrote the following in his *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM Press, 1964, pp. 48-49): "Over few subjects has there been such bitter battle among New Testament scholars of the last two centuries as over the miracle-stories of the Gospels. It was inevitable that in this sphere, as almost nowhere else, there should be a clash between supernaturalism and rationalism as manifestations respectively of traditional ecclesiastical orthodoxy and of the modern criticism of this orthodoxy and its tradition. We may say that today the battle is over, not perhaps as yet in the arena of church life, but certainly in the field of theological science. It has ended in the defeat of the concept of miracle which has been traditional in the church; and this defeat has been brought about by attacks from two different quarters, between which there has been constant and far from accidental interaction. First miracle in general was offensive to the world view of the modern age and to the concept of nature and causality which was bound up with it. On the other side, historical research and comparative study of religion led to the conclusion that the new Testament miracle stories 1) have been subject to a quite definite development, viz. that in the course of the tradition they have been multiplied and heightened; 2) have countless analogies (from which they cannot be isolated) in classical antiquity; 3) are narrated according to a fixed form, so that it is possible to speak with accuracy of a technique of the miracle story. Some examples illustrate this."

Dr. Kaesemann's first example, cited at length, is the story of the Resurrection of Christ. Criticism, it is believed, must deny on compelling scientific grounds that any person ever rose from the dead. The story has no more than symbolic meaning. To be sure, Dr. Kaesemann concedes that there have been mistakes made in the application of criticism to

the Bible. But the results of criticism cannot be given up: "In spite of all its aberrations, it (criticism) has proved itself to be an appropriate method of procedure. In consequence, we also are bound by its findings and are confident that any errors will be uncovered and corrected from within" (p. 56).

Incidentally, let the reader note that Prof. Kaesemann treats historical criticism as a controlling instrument (not as a neutral tool) of the exegete, normative for judging and assessing the content of Scripture.

Prof. Regin Preter of Aarhus University in Denmark was considered a conservative systematic Lutheran theologian attentive to the Lutheran Confessions, but unwilling to break with the Historical-Critical Method: "Naturally the historico-critical treatment of the evangelical tradition [in the New Testament] is never able to establish anything but the purely human reality of the historical existence of Jesus . . . Nevertheless, that it is the Creator himself who is present in Jesus' humanity has always been an impossible idea to historical criticism. Therefore historical criticism necessarily collides with everything in the tradition concerning Jesus which ascribes to him such divine majesty." (*Creation and Redemption*, Fortress Press, 1967, p. 433).

Literary Forms and Traditions

WHEN interpreters like Gunkel, v. Rad, Alt, Noth, Bultmann, Guenther Bornkamm, Conzelmann, Kaesemann, and their American disciples do form criticism or history of tradition criticism, they claim that the study of literary forms and the study of tradition in the context of history interprets the Scriptures apart from its verbal content. For example, Ps. 110 is first of all a coronation psalm which later on was given a messianic interpretation and attributed to David.

The claims of literary criticism may be summarized thus: Nothing in the Bible should be taken at "face value," nothing is quite what it appears to be; the Bible is really not an open book, as the Reformers claimed it was. Hence the Bible must not be interpreted in terms of itself, but according to tools of literary or historical criticism and its scientific categories. Contemporary academic theologians have bluntly rejected the Scriptures as the very Word of God, at least in leading divinity faculties. But historical-critical exegetes have not yet triumphed in the arena of church life, as Kaesemann conceded.

Historical Criticism and Church Life

IT is simply not possible for Christians to accept skeptical or unbelieving assumptions about the Bible. All claims that it is possible to do historical-critical exegesis in harmony with the basic affirmations of the Christian faith are clearly contradictory, and therefore false. It is contradictory to assert faith in the Scriptures as the Word of God, according to the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, to confess the authority and integrity of the Scriptures as the only source of knowledge in theology, and to do the work of interpreting the Scriptures according to the faithless criteria of historical criticism. The interpreter who says that he must find the Word of God in the content of the Scriptures is likely to find only the product of his exegetical imagination.

Historical Criticism and Scientific Methodology

THE procedures which constitute historical criticism or the Historical-Critical Method may be regarded as the product of an empirical theory. It is surely proper to expect that such a theory and its procedures be testable. Philosophers of science admit three tests: 1) that the logical simplicity

or economy of the theory (sometimes called "elegance") be superior to that of other theories; 2) that the theory produce statements (statements deducible from the theory) which can be demonstrated to be true; 3) that the theory do not permit the formulation of statements (deducible from the theory) which in turn can be shown to be false.

Historical-critical exegetes of the Bible seem incapable of appreciating the fact that a consistent scrutiny of their method by such admitted tests marks their enterprise with a Scotch verdict: Not proven. But from the Christian believer's perspective, the Historical-Critical Method is a deadly failure: it dissects the Bible as though it were a cadaver in a medical laboratory useful only for the training of other technicians in the dissecting of other corpses.

A long time ago, Giordano Bruno called attention to the very human inclination of determining "facts" largely by the observer's *intenzioni*, meaning the whole set of convictions and expectations with which he comes to his work. If a method may be compared to a modern computer as a "neutral tool," assuming we have permission to play this game, then it may be possible to see that the same slogan has its application: Garbage in, garbage out.

Some Other Perspectives

IT may also be a useful reminder that the President of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., announced to the Seminary community and to the church on March 6, 1972, that no one dealing with the Scriptures in all seriousness can do exegesis on the seminary level without using the Historical-Critical Method. The statement ought to be understood also in another context: the St. Louis Seminary faculty claims the right and obligation of theological leadership in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for the imposition of the Historical-Critical Method upon the source and fountain of the doctrines of the Christian church.

In the late 1940's, Dr. Paul Scherer, a ULC pastor who left Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Manhattan to serve as professor of homiletics at Union Theology Seminary, publicly took the hard position that Lutheran union will never happen until Lutherans (specifically Missouri Synod Lutherans) learn to agree that the Bible is not the Word of God, but merely contains the Word of God. Only then will Lutherans in America also learn to accept modern critical interpretations of the Bible. Without that, there will be no concord.

His prediction was accurate on every point. The LCA seminaries had accepted Dr. Scherer's position long ago. Recently, the ALC seminaries have joined them. The position of the faculty majority of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, was announced by President Tietjen on March 6, 1972.

Unless the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will decisively uphold its historic confession that the Scriptures are in all respects the Word of God, and consequently reject a method of interpretation which denies that confessional assertion, it is unlikely that the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod can long endure beyond its 125th anniversary.

Summary for Discussion

1. Historical-Critical is that method of interpretation which uses the criteria of scientific historical investigation to analyse the sacred text in terms of language, literary forms, and redaction criticism for the purpose of discovering how much of the "historical" content of the events described can be recaptured. The text is a primary source for the time of writing and merely of secondary importance for the time of the events described.

(Continued on Page 38)

Some Sobering Reflections on the Use Of The Historical-Critical Method

BECAUSE the Scriptures are the Word of God, written for us men by the chosen and inspired prophets and apostles of God, the Historical-Critical Method is as inadequate (to put it mildly) for the interpretation of the Scriptures as a two-dimensional map is inadequate for the geographer's interpretation of the earth. When they are consistent, these historical critics of the Bible do in reality and in practice deny that the meaning of the text which the Christian teaching exhibited in the Lutheran Confessions (Book of Concord) is authoritative and binding for the doctrine and life of all Christians.

The reason for their disposition lies not far away. No scientific-historical research will confirm for a person the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. A qualified expert may investigate what can be known about the Biblical text. But if he assumes that the relation of the Bible to the believing community is the same, let's say, as that of the English-speaking people to their literature, then he demonstrates at once his incompetence to deal with matters of revelation. He misses the ultimate point of Christian interpretation—that the Scriptures offer us the things God wants to reveal to man.

Because the Scriptures are the Word of God, the Historical-Critical Method is incapable of adequately dealing with their interpretation. The method does not differ essentially from the scientific method used in a laboratory experiment or a project in historical research. Its defenders sometimes have made great efforts to assert that their procedures are as objectively scientific as those who work in other sciences.

But no laboratory test can possibly detect even the slightest trace of God's grace at work among men. No scientific bit of historical research will ever discover the footsteps of a redeeming Christ. Both can investigate and depict what can be and has been observed according to criteria men have established for this kind of discipline; but neither is competent to deal with matters that reach men only by way of revelation. The latter are offered "from faith to faith" (Romans 1:17); they are not accessible to the procedures and faculties of men (I Cor. 2:14, 15). Since the Scriptures were written to offer men such things as God wants them to know by revelation, any scientific approach to them is incapable of dealing with their central thrust.

The Dimensions of the Apostolic Witness

LET us take a very simple example of how the Historical-Critical Method falls short of what a given text offers. In I Corinthians 15:3 St. Paul writes that among the most important things he had learned and taught was the fact that "Christ died on behalf of our sins according to the Scriptures." That is his apostolic witness to the Crucifixion.

We can be very sure that Pontius Pilate did not say anything about Christ dying for the sins of the world when he wrote up his official report on this occasion. He thought of the violent death of Jesus of Nazareth in terms of his administrative responsibilities: nailing to the cross an unfortunate non-citizen for a grave crime. St. Paul, however, saw that this had been no ordinary crucifixion. Enlightened by the Spirit, he understood it to be an act of atonement for the sins of the world. Very significantly, he added the phrase, "according to the Scriptures." The Old Testament

helped him to view the Crucifixion for what it was designed by God to accomplish for and among men.

Pilate was incapable of applying any other standards to Calvary than the criteria of human observation. He had nothing to guide him except the two-dimensional chart of existence. Hence he missed the meaning of the central event of human history. A purely objective and, for his day, scientific evaluation misled him by keeping from him the full dimensions of meaning of what had taken place.

By definition, the Historical-Critical Method is scientific. As such it can get little beyond Pontius Pilate. It can verify the fact that Paul, the writer of the letters to the Corinthians, believed that Jesus Christ died on behalf of man's sin. Sitting outside the text, a scientific analyst can get no further than noting that this proposition regarding the Crucifixion belonged to the creed of Paul.

But it requires no faith to say that much. The text says so. Any one can see it, whether he is an unbelieving exegete, a Hindu, a Moslem, or even an atheist. Any analysis and description of what Paul wrote will yield this result. The use of the Historical-Critical Method can offer that much. What it cannot do is to provide the insight and belief that what St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians is an apostolic word, written to call every reader to identify with Paul.

That is to say, the Biblical text asks for obedience and not just for the recognition that Saul of Tarsus once responded to the Crucifixion with the words that he wrote in I Corinthians 15. Being God's word, the text tells us not only what the Crucifixion once meant; it also insists that it means right now exactly what St. Paul understood it to be. Here we enter the dimension of meaning and not just observation.

Importance of Inspiration

SINCE they were written by prophets, apostles and evangelists, Biblical documents may not properly be thought of and/or referred to as *ad hoc* materials. They came into being to offer an authoritative look into the ways of God as He deals with His creation in both grace and judgment. That is what makes the doctrine of inspiration an item of such importance; and that is also the reason why this teaching is generally ignored by those who employ the Historical-Critical Method. For this doctrine indicates that the Scriptures are God's word not only in the sense that they are His creation, but also because the Biblical text is itself a creative word, carrying within it the authority of none other than God himself.

For the fact of inspiration we point to II Peter 1:20-21, where the word "moved" (*pheromenoi*) is the same one that occurs just previously in a context that speaks of the Transfiguration. There it is said that a voice from heaven broke in to say, "This is my beloved Son . . ." (II Peter 1:17) What prophets, apostles and evangelists have written is like that voice. No scientific method has any way of dealing with what breaks into existence from the outside, for the simple reason that such a phenomenon can not be validated by the criteria of scientific investigation and description. The doctrine of inspiration keeps reminding us that the Biblical text offers the dimension of divine intervention into the cause-and-effect chain which keeps so much of life confined and limited.

Beyond Cause and Effect

THE person who espouses the Historical-Critical Method is stuck with its assumption that there is nothing beyond the cause-and-effect relationship. He works with an approach which insists that once a man has determined the cause, or origin, of a thing, or of an event, he has grasped its meaning. This is like saying that, when men discovered that two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen constitute a molecule of water, they had discovered the significance of this element.

When this method is applied, let us say, to studies of the Biblical account of the Exodus, the only point it can really validate in terms of strict cause and effect relationships is that Israel somehow came to believe what is given in the text. To be sure, the critic will try to get through the text and speculate on the "historical" core, on the assumption that, if only the nucleus could be peeled out, the real truth of the matter would be exhibited.

We might take as a case in point J. Edgar Park's exposition of Exodus 13: 20-22, as given on page 931 of volume one of the *Interpreter's Bible*. There he discusses the phenomenon of the pillar of cloud and of fire; and this is what he wrote:

This designation, which is an accurate description of a volcano, has led some to see in the tidal flood in the Red Sea and in the experiences at Sinai ancient memories of volcanic disturbances taking place at the time of the Exodus. . . . The similarity of the phenomena described, and the possibility that Mount Sinai was near the sea, leave the reader free to indulge his imagination on the matter as he will. Actually these things took place so long ago that it is impossible now to be certain whether the tidal wave, the cloud of fire, and the burning mountain were originally religious symbols or literally volcanic fact.

In this way the text has become a primary source of data and information for the time when the book was written but only a secondary, or even tertiary, source for the event described. It is not difficult to see how such an approach tends to subvert the once-for-all (Hebrews 9:12) character of God's redemptive actions. In point of fact, this is a way of turning the Biblical revelation into religion. That is to say, according to the Historical-Critical Method, the Biblical text offers information on man's response to God rather than providing statements of God's offer of grace to men from outside the confining context of existence. It changes the story from that of being an account of man as the object of God's gracious action to becoming the record of God being the object of man's religious response.

A Kind of Arianism

IN a very real sense, therefore, the Historical-Critical Method can easily lead the exegete into the adoption of a kind of Arianism. The central point of the conflict that once raged between Arius and Athanasius, the reader may recall, was the question whether Jesus Christ was the Creator (*poietes*) become Incarnate, or whether, like some Greek god, He was and is only an engineer, a manipulator (*architekton*) of matter. In the former instance, He would be "of the same substance" with the Father; in the latter, He would be part of human systems and structures. And Athanasius understood that well: if Jesus is no more than a part of the created order, there could be no redemption because no one has come from beyond to serve as "the Dayspring from on high."

Fortunately, Athanasius won that contest, eventually, and

the truth and certainty of man's liberation continued to be taught in the church. We can only hope that in due time the deficiencies and fallacies of the Historical-Critical Method will be exhibited even more generally than they already have been in various parts of Christendom. For it is no small matter to be able to confess that the Scriptures are, indeed, the word of God, created to offer grace and to invite to obedience. Under any circumstances, this is no time to be suggesting that somehow the Historical-Critical Method is the real answer to the problems of Biblical interpretation.

Biblical Authority

IN any serious discussion and evaluation of the Historical-Critical Method the question of the authority of Scripture is at issue. The nature of that authority may, perhaps, be understood best from the story of the healing of the paralytic (Mark 2:1-12). During the course of that incident, Jesus spoke two words of authority; one to forgive sins; the other to heal a man. Both worked.

The Scriptures tell the story of God's authority at work among men to liberate them or to bring them under judgment. But the telling of it is more than reading a record of what happened in the long ago. The very reading of the text constitutes a handling of God's word. That is to say, the text invites men to accept it as true and so to believe that this is the way God is at work redeeming men. The authority of the Scriptures, therefore, derives from the fact that what it says is true. In short, the text is not about truth; it is itself truth.

Such authority is quite independent of the reader or hearer. For, while the text of Scripture addresses itself to the reader (interpreter) to speak of what God has done *pro nobis*, the story it offers is that of mighty acts done *extra nos*. The written witness to them, as given in the Biblical documents, starts outside of us even as it began long before we came into being. Accordingly, as the *Formula of Concord*, puts it, "We believe, teach, and confess that the sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas as well as all teachers should be evaluated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments alone . . ." (F.C., Par 1 of *Summary to Epitome*). There is, then, an objectivity about the Biblical revelation which precedes and transcends human response.

Sola Scriptura

DEVOTEES of the Historical-Critical Method seldom have any stomach for the Reformation principle that the Scriptures are the *sola* (not *prima!*) *regula fidei*. For when men begin to analyze texts with the aid of principles of literary and redaction criticism, they find sources of authority not only (if they find them at all) in the text of Scriptures but also, and even primarily, at various points in the history of the development of the text from oral tradition, literary sources, through various redactions to the final form as given in the canonical text.

A good case in point might be the handling of the parable of the "Laborers in the Vineyard" (Matthew 20:1-16) as given in Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1954, pp. 24-26). Jeremias agrees that as the parable reads in the canonical text "it is intended to teach the quality of reward in the kingdom of God." But then he goes on to argue that, in the original setting of Jesus' life, the story was told to vindicate the Gospel in the face of Pharisaic critics. In this case the parable depicts "the behavior of a large-hearted man who is compassionate and full of sympathy for the poor." Since Jeremias be-

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Twenty-Two Questions on Historical-Critical Methodology

In May, 1972, President J.A.O. Preus suggested to the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, during a meeting with the Synodical Praesidium and the faculty, that the faculty minority and representatives of the faculty majority engage in discussions on disputed points of doctrine. He urged Dr. Tietjen to arrange for such meetings.

The suggested encounter between representatives of the faculty majority and the faculty minority never took place because Dr. Tietjen ignored the request of the Synodical President. But in anticipation of the possibility of such meetings Dr. Richard Klann and Dr. Martin Scharlemann last June composed these questions for discussion.

In the event that these topics are discussed during circuit or pastoral conferences, orthodox participants should carefully determine first of all whether they share a common theological basis with their partners in discussion. It is suggested that the reader take his time to understand each question before he participates in dialogue.

If defenders of historical-critical methodology are present, they are likely to avoid a direct discussion of the issues raised by these questions, particularly if they are faculty members of the St. Louis Seminary. Orthodox inquirers probably will receive no answers or only partial answers to their questions.

1. Since there is general agreement among experts that historical criticism must employ tools of historical methodology no different in principle from those of the secular historian, how can you do your work of interpretation with Lutheran assertions of faith—which no secular historian will accept as elements of his methodology?
2. If you consider revelation (Scripture) to be history, and study it as history, how do the criteria of historical study permit you to regard the Scriptures as the Word of God, given to prophets and apostles by divine revelation or inspiration?
3. Do you believe that the *bruta facta* of the Scriptures are uncertain as the ground of faith, beginning with the story of creation and the fall of man? If you think some are uncertain, identify such events as historical or non-historical.
4. Do you believe that the book of Genesis (specifically including the first eleven chapters) is historical? If you have concluded that Genesis 1-11 is mythological, but that the account of the exodus of Israel from Egypt is history, by what criteria do you make such a judgment and also preach or teach it?
5. Do you believe that your work as interpreter of the Scriptures is determined by your "existential awareness as a religious personality?" If so, how do you propose to demonstrate that your interpretations are Biblically consistent, confessionally agreeable, and devoid of subjectivity?
6. Form criticism is done on the supposition that our Gospels were written as a convenient summary of an oral tradition used in preaching. Units of such primitive preaching can be identified, it is said, both according to their forms and settings (in most cases) as well as the reason or situation for their use in preaching in the ancient church, which determined their shape and content. By his analysis, the form critic hopes to identify the words and deeds properly to be attributable to Jesus Himself, and to separate them from the content produced by the early church. Thus the form critic thinks he can isolate true information about the historical Jesus. How can this be done by someone who regards the Scriptures as the Lutheran Confessions do—as the very Word of God?
7. Redaction criticism has been described as a study concerned with "the theological motivation of an author as it is revealed in the collection, arrangement, editing, and modification of traditional material, and in the composition of new material or the creation of new forms within the tradition of early Christianity." Since such a study obviously rejects on principle the Lutheran confessional assertion that the Scriptures are the Word of God, how can redaction criticism be done "with Lutheran presupposition?"
8. How do you relate literary analysis to the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures?
9. How do you relate the Reformation principle that "the literal sense of a passage is one" to the proposition that the interpreter must ask, "What did the text mean originally?" and "What does the text mean now—today?"
10. How do you relate the doctrine of inspiration to the matter of Scriptural authority? If you attribute authority selectively to parts of the Bible, on what basis do you make your decision?
11. What do you teach, confess, and believe regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ? In which way does your interpretation differ from that which the Confessions have made regarding the resurrection of our Lord?
12. How do you relate "social action" to "gospel proclamation?"
13. What is the Gospel in the "narrow sense," as you believe and teach it in your own classroom?
14. Consider Jesus' statement that there will be no marriage in heaven. Explain your understanding of Biblical authority in terms of that.
15. Do you teach that the Virgin Birth was a biological miracle?
16. Explain the difference between the authority of the Scriptures and your preaching or teaching the Word of God.
17. What do you teach regarding the significance and authority of statements by Jesus that at the end of history conditions in the world will be so bad that God will shorten those days for the sake of the elect?
18. Did Jesus say the words in Matt. 22:7 during His earthly ministry?

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Historical-Critical Method Differs from Higher Criticism

By Rev. Edwin G. Tieman

"The question is not whether you use the historical critical method—but which method you use," said Dr. Edgar Krentz in a talk here Jan. 9. A professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Dr. Krentz addressed about 50 pastors attending the Concordia College Pastoral Conference.

The speaker made it clear that the historical critical method he uses is not the same as higher criticism. He also demonstrated how he uses the historical critical method in teaching at the Seminary. Using the Greek text, he explained the history of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection, based on the four Gospels. He gave consideration to the text, the literary form, the historical setting, the original meaning of the words, and understanding the message.

He said: "The translations of the Bible were meant to be the laymen's Bible, the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament are the preachers' Bible." After the presentation, the pastors generally agreed that, if this demonstration was typical of the historical critical method, they had no objections to the method.

At the conclusion of the pre-

sentation Dr. Krentz listed 10 objections that many have to the method and 10 reasons for the use of the method.

The 10 objections:

1. The historical critical method is done by humans, therefore, the results must be human.

2. As a method, it takes no account of the fact that the Bible is written from faith TO faith.

3. Does it not put the Bible at the mercy of scholarship? Scholarship becomes a substitute for proclamation.

4. It undermines the Bible as The Word. It removes God from history.

5. It destroys the unity of the Bible.

6. The historical critical method assumes it is the only valid way to read the Bible.

7. The Bible becomes the domain of a few scholars and relates the rest of us to functional scriptural illiteracy.

8. It often assumes that it is the whole of theology and thus exercises tyranny to the Christian faith.

9. Going behind the text, it thus denies the Sola Scriptura.

10. Since its methods are human, its conclusions will be secular.

The 10 reasons for using the

Historical Critical Method are:

1. It compels us to take the very words of the Bible seriously.

2. It makes one take the specificity of the text; not just sugar water.

3. It does not create problems, but calls attention to problems in the Scriptures or the verse.

4. It looks for the intended sense of the Bible verse.

5. Most all of the tools of the Bible have been a contribution of those who used the historical critical method.

6. It points faith to its proper sphere. As Luther reminds us—"for us."

7. It helps underscore what is the real "scandal" of the Christian faith.

8. It shows us how vulnerable faith is.

9. It is congruent with Lutheran theology and the doctrine of the Word.

10. It is text "gefunden" not application. It is bound and oriented to the text.

When asked about the controversy at the Seminary, Dr. Krentz said: "The debate at St. Louis is not a debate between conservatives and liberals, but a debate between conservatives and men who are more conservative Christians."

Sorting Out the Problems

The February 1st, 1973 issue of the BADGER LUTHERAN reported an address to the Milwaukee Pastoral Conference by Dr. Edgar Krentz in defense of "the historical-critical method." (The article is reproduced on page eight.)

Since the BADGER LUTHERAN report stated that the Milwaukee Pastoral Conference favorably received Dr. Krentz' views on "the historical-critical method," we decided that unless Dr. Krentz had sharply changed his convictions on the matter as we know those views from his writings, oral presentations and conversations, the brethren of the Milwaukee Pastoral Conference who expressed their agreement with Dr. Krentz either had not fully understood him or else had become supporters of the Historical-Critical Method.

In order to be helpful to our Milwaukee brethren as well as to serve other brethren, we asked Dr. Richard Klann to write his analysis of Dr. Krentz' "ten reasons." Before he did that, Dr. Klann called on Dr. Krentz on February 16th to ask him whether the BADGER LUTHERAN had correctly stated his "ten reasons" and to request Dr. Krentz briefly to explain some points, so that the analysis would not miss Dr. Krentz' intention.

AN analysis of reasons given in support of the Historical-Critical Method, without having been present for the address, can be done only on the assumption that the reported reasons are clear and sufficient statements of a position. Let us assume that this is so. An experienced exegete, like Dr. Krentz, who offers ten theses in support of a methodological policy, will expect and perhaps welcome an analysis of his statements.

Self-Identification

A major problem for such discussion is the classification "historical-critical method." Not every Christian exegete claims to be committed to the Historical-Critical Method when he interprets the Scriptures. Since Dr. Krentz includes himself among the defenders of historical criticism as a valid and necessary policy for the interpretation of a Biblical text, such an identification must be taken seriously.

That means, first of all, we must understand the implications of such a self-classification or identification of Dr. Krentz. Just as a philosophical systematician is someone who declares that all questions or human problems are philosophical issues for which one may search out suitable answers in philosophical discourse, so also an historical-critical exegete applies the categories of historical criticism to his work of interpretation.

A Method Is Not a Tool

Such categories must not be confused with "tools of interpretation." Dictionaries, grammars, classifications of styles and forms, principles of linguistics, archeological and historical studies, etc., are not categories of interpretation. Obviously, the term "tool" is used metaphorically by the interpreters. To put an old chestnut to rest: Of course a tool is neutral! It has no power to do anything at all. It is always directed by the intention and power of the user. For example, a tool called a knife is no longer neutral when the user identifies himself as a surgeon or as a cut-throat. It is therefore the classification of the user which determines our understanding of the use of the tool. Let us eliminate this confusion: A tool is not a method. A method of interpretation is at once a declaration of the belief of the interpreter and of the policy which he intends to adopt for his work. Dr. Krentz errs when he calls historical criticism of the Bible a tool of interpretation.

If interpretive tools are used according to the categories of historical criticism, then the exegete can properly call himself an historical-critical interpreter of the Bible. To say,

however, that one follows historical-critical methodology in the interpretation of the Scriptures, but to deny in the same breath that the principles and criteria of criticism are used, is either a naive form of self-deception or possibly an act of misleading an unwary and trusting audience.

It is not possible to prevent someone from claiming to use a lethal instrument for innocent purposes. But if we inspect the work of those who have used such an instrument and find that they have made a corpse of a living thing, it is certainly elementary wisdom to conclude that while the instrument may be neutral, the user or practitioner most certainly is not.

Touchy Ethical Issues

Our first point of ethics must be raised by the question whether we are in an "Alice in Wonderland" situation, where the terms used mean no more nor less than an exegete devoted to his Historical-Critical Method says they mean for the moment? If that is so, discussion becomes impossible.

A serious ethical issue arises when Christian interpreters signal their denial of the very possibility of being charged with error by their peers. The record of a bland refusal even to listen to contrary views expressed by faculty colleagues, the hard-nosed resort to "procedure" and "administrative action" when it suits them and they possess the power to do so, and the outright defiance or rejection of truthful positions or formulations—these are facets of a record of denials of a most painful state of affairs built on the false assumption that denials attentively heard have the force of proof. They appear to be the actions of those who are determined to fend off persuasion by the suppression of the truth in the interest of retaining power won by skillfully executed procedures.

A third ethical issue arises from the fact that some interpreters appear to assume that the ability and opportunity to become historical-critical exegetes in a church seminary also guarantees approval for their work, even though official resolutions entail rejections of their methodology. We must note that such an attitude is joined to an erroneous notion of freedom to do as they please, without rendering a complete account to the church body which employs them. Do "freedom in the Gospel" and "theological leadership" confer license to change theological positions endorsed by a church body since its beginnings? Since when is a Christian teacher free to teach as he pleases?

Criticism and Responsibility

Since Dr. Krentz calls himself a historical-critical interpreter of Scripture, he must also accept principles and criteria of criticism set forth elsewhere in this issue. We conclude that he is serious about the Historical-Critical Method, just as this method is also recognized and accepted by others within and outside of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod who say they cannot do exegesis without the use of historical criticism.

The numbered statements are Dr. Krentz' theses in support of "the historical-critical method" as they were reported in the February 1st, 1973 issue of the *Badger Lutheran*.

Thesis 1 Analysis

"It compels us to take the very words of the Bible seriously." The statement implies the charge that a Christian may not be or cannot be serious about "the very words of the Bible," unless he uses the Historical-Critical Method. That distortion makes an exclusive claim for a disputed method. Under the circumstances, the claim so announced may have its greatest effect if its unspoken arrogance envelopes the unconvinced listener with a sense of inferiority regarding his own exegetical habits.

But even if we were to grant an aspect of that thesis to be true, it really does not say much to us. By definition, criticism would hardly deserve the name if it did not take seriously every text to be studied, regardless of whether that text is Homer's *Iliad* or a book of the Bible. Dr. Krentz also misleads his audience whenever he claims that "historical criticism" is not the same as "higher criticism." Originally, "higher criticism" expressed the notion that the scholars were going beyond "textual criticism" into questions regarding the origins and authenticity of the text by means of their inspection and evaluation of the literary structure of the text. Historical criteria certainly were also used for the task wherever possible.

Modern scholars understand "historical criticism" as the comprehensive term for a method by which the liberal exegete approaches his work of interpreting the Bible with the conviction that only historical data, criteria, analogies, procedures are valid for the proper interpretation of the text. To be sure, such a person may be serious about his work, but he is very far from confessing that the word of Scripture he is studying is also the very Word of God. Should he offer the "happy inconsistency" of saying that the Scriptures are the very Word of God, why does he employ "criticism," which by definition assumes the Scriptures to be the word of man?

Thesis 2 Analysis

"It makes one take the specificity of the text." At first glance, it is difficult to know what Dr. Krentz might possibly mean by "specificity of the text." Specifically, according to Webster's dictionary, the noun "specificity" means a specific medical remedy. Let's assume in kindness he had in mind the point that the interpreter must do his work attentive to the specific purpose of the text.

But if the *wissenschaftlich* and objective interpreter proceeds thus, how does he avoid "begging the question?" If the specific purpose of the text determines his means of interpretation—and he cannot know the purpose of a text unless he has already interpreted it or in some way made up his mind about it—how can he ever know either the proper means of interpretation or the purpose of a text? Dr. Krentz' notion lacks coherence.

Thesis 3 Analysis

"It does not create problems, but calls attention to problems in the Scriptures or in the verse." This is a half-truth. Some defenders of historical criticism have used it perniciously. For example, according to Gen. 3, Adam and Eve had no problems in the Garden of Eden until Satan through the serpent asked questions which have created problems ever since that moment. Actually, the "problems" are not in the Scriptures, but in the perversity of the fallen human understanding.

We can create problems almost everywhere in the Scriptures by asking the question of Nicodemus: "How can these things be?" or "How is this possible?" Only the doubter or unbeliever will blame the Scriptures for his problems.

If we were to reduce the meaning of Dr. Krentz' thesis to an invitation to dialogue, issued to the historical-critical exegete, the observation becomes necessary that such interpreters have nowhere demonstrated a unique possession of the right questions and answers. Even on the merely humanistic level of consideration, all inclusive claims of methodological rectitude or unique advantages made in the behalf of historical-critical interpretive procedures are either untrue or grossly exaggerated.

Thesis 4 Analysis

"It looks for the intended sense of the Bible verse." Remembering that Dr. Krentz identified himself as a historical-critical interpreter, let the reader please compare this with his Thesis 2. Obviously, the alert reader will conclude, the "begging of the question" is being repeated here. Really an elementary logical error in which no interpreter ought to be caught! We appeal to the reader's charity.

Thesis 5 Analysis

"Almost all of the tools of the Bible have been a contribution of those who used the historical critical method." Tools of Biblical interpretation were known long before the arrival of the historical-critical interpreter. Luther and other Fathers of the Reformation possessed an excellent knowledge of valid tools of interpretation without being devotees of "criticism" of the Bible. The assertion must be called false—unless Dr. Krentz wishes to give notice here that modern interpretive tools of the historical-critical exegete render obsolete Luther's interpretation of the Bible and his teachings drawn from the Bible. If so, our analysis would have to take a different turn.

Thesis 6 Analysis

"It points faith to its proper sphere. As Luther reminds us —'for us'." The "proper sphere of faith" is as comprehensive as the First Commandment (see Luther's *Large Catechism*). Dr. Krentz appeals to Luther when he restricts faith to "saving faith," the means by which the believer accepts the word of absolution—"for us" or "for me." It is also called "special faith" in Lutheran theology. Compare this with "general faith," a term used by Lutheran theologians to designate assent to and trust in all truths revealed in Scripture.

By his appeal to Luther, Dr. Krentz also opens the sluice gates of disaster for his historical-critical point of view. In his last sermon preached at Wittenberg, January 17th, 1546 (St. Louis ed. XII, 1169ff.), Luther does very sharply and completely reject Dr. Krentz' "gospel reductionism." Luther says that the same faith which seeks and accepts forgiveness of sins offered only by Christ continues to be active also by holding on to *all* the doctrines taught by Christ's word. Similarly, he says (St. Louis ed. 11, 2029:327 on Gen.

49.16-18): "Auf solche weise ist auch der Glaube leiblicher Dinge, die man noch nicht vor Augen sieht, *einerlei* mit dem Glauben der Rechtfertigung und Vergebung der Sünden." (Emphasis added)

In his repudiation of Dr. Krentz' "gospel reductionism," Luther makes the important point in his statement that there is no difference between "saving faith," which accepts Christ's redeeming sacrifice "for us," and "general faith," which accepts as literally true the "corporeal" or historical assertions in the Bible. Historical-critical interpreters of the Bible, who claim to be doing their work with Lutheran presuppositions, must find Luther's interpretations and teachings extremely difficult, if not impossible, to tolerate.

Thesis 7 Analysis

"It helps underscore what is the real 'scandal' of the Christian faith." Since historical-critical interpretations do indeed proceed from unbelieving assumptions, they certainly do show and underscore also what is the real "scandal" of the Christian faith. It is the same which St. Paul ascribes to the Jews in I Cor. 1:23—"We on our part preach Christ crucified, a scandal to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles." Yes, it helps to underscore the scandal of unbelief, because criticism is part of the scandal of unbelief.

Thesis 8 Analysis

"It shows us how vulnerable faith is." Neither the doctrines of the faith nor God's gift of faith are ever vulnerable. But the believer, who is willing to be tempted by interpretations of Scripture which are made in terms of faithless or unbelieving epistemological elements, is surely vulnerable. A doubting Thomas will not hear the disciples' witness of the resurrection of Christ. He says he will trust no man's report. He will rely on his five senses to determine what is real. With serious concern for the welfare of Christians in their search of the Scriptures, we ought to ask Dr. Krentz why anyone full of good will could possibly want to recommend a method of interpretation whose outcome is the demonstration that the Christian faith is fragile and vulnerable, specifically as exhibited in the devotees of criticism. An edifying method of interpretation strengthens the Christian's faith. Why recommend an unedifying method to the Christians of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod?

Thesis 9 Analysis

"It is congruent with Lutheran theology and the doctrine of the Word." To say that about historical-critical interpretations of the Bible demands the mild rebuke: It is untrue. Those who hear the word "congruent" in good faith, and conclude that every aspect of critical methodology fits Lutheran theology and the doctrine of the Word as congruent triangles or squares in geometry fit each other, are misled to accept an untrue picture. Such an unethical policy statement will surely deceive our Christian people who have never heard nor analyzed the unbelieving philosophical structure or "dynamic" which actually propels the investigative "tools" of the historical-critical interpreter.

Our Christian people have lost confidence in the interpretive policy of our exegetes who consider themselves representatives of historical-critical interpretation. Participants in various encounters with critical exegetes have reported that these defenders of historical criticism parade such harmless aspects of interpretation before their audiences as classifications of forms of speech and style, textual and literary analyses, as though these represented the raw side of historical criticism. Such misrepresentations left Christian audi-

ences with the impression that historical criticism had been explained to them. That lamentable exercise in misleading the Christian public must be painful to the honest and forthright historical-critical scholar who will not conceal his thought and work from anyone.

Thesis 10 Analysis

"It is *textgebunden*. The application is bound to be oriented to the text." As a declaration of intent it would be excellent. But it is hardly congruent with the facts. Let the reader remind himself that the critical interpreter agrees to be bound by the text only in so far as the criteria of historical investigation which he recognizes permit him to do so. Such an interpreter may have become a masterful hermeneutical prestidigitator.

But the Christian interpreter, illumined by the gifts of the Spirit of Christ, as Luther tirelessly repeated, is first and always a humble hearer of the Word, and never the interpreter lord and master of the Gospel (understood in the wide sense of the term).

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Reflections . . . (Continued from Page 6)

lieves, as do many other historical critics, that the closer the interpreter can get to the original setting of a word spoken by Jesus, the more authoritative it becomes, the source of creative power is not in the text itself but at a point behind it and outside of it.

This practice of establishing points of authority outside the text is sometimes extended by those practitioners of the Historical-Critical Method who still have some theological interests. They insist that meaning is to be found not only in the way an evangelist has applied a word of Jesus but also, and especially, in the way such a word is proclaimed today. And so we hear about the church as being the inspired community and the word of God being what goes on in the church today. There is no room in this kind of context for the *sola Scriptura* principle, even when there is much talk of *sola gratia* and *sola fide*. The use of the Historical-Critical Method leads men to abandon the conviction that the Scriptures sit in judgment also over what goes on in the life of the church, including its preaching.

The next step along this route is the substitution of "I think" and/or "I feel" for the Biblical, "Thus says the Lord." When the interpreter takes this direction, he opens up the sluice gates to all kinds of *schwaermerei*, as Luther called it. All sense of objectivity in the Biblical revelation evaporates; and the sheep of God's flock are left without the guidance and direction provided by their Shepherd in the Scriptures as His means of grace.

Teaching For Information Only

What has been said so far is not intended to suggest that theological students ought not to be taught about the Method. No responsible curriculum could leave out such a study. But the teaching of the material needs to be done in much the same way as time is given, let us say, to a study and analysis of the allegorical method as it was used in the early and in the medieval church. The Method needs to be explained in such a way as to enable students and pastors to read with understanding the literature which uses the Method, but with the constant caveats of its pitfalls and fallacies.

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The Swing of the Pendulum: An Attempt to Understand the St. Louis 'Affirmations and Discussions'

1. Preliminary Orientation

SINCE the Seminary document did not fall from Heaven into Luther Tower, a historical-critical study of its intended meaning and function is indicated.

Standing back for a bit of perspective, it seems best to start with the thinking of Theodore Graebner, one of the finest intellects the Missouri Synod has produced. Like Melancthon before him, T. G. was prodigiously learned and analytical. The breadth of his outlook is reflected in his classic *God and the Cosmos*, which no doubt whetted and shaped the philosophical and theological appetites of many of us. And also like Melancthon, Graebner gave impetus to developments the outcome of which he could neither foresee nor approve.

As I see it, the 1945 *Statement* was concerned, in a somewhat stifling atmosphere, to assert two great Reformation truths and their consequences for inter-Lutheran relations: 1) the absolute centrality of Christ and His Atonement for all doctrine and theology; and 2) the exclusive normativeness of Scripture itself, as distinct from mere exegetical opinions and traditions. In other words, we have here a concern for the material and the formal principles, and for their proper correlation.

Behind the *Statement* is Graebner's theologically much more adequate *The Historical Lutheran Position in Non-Fundamentals*, issued by C.P.H. (Concordia Publishing House) in 1939. It deserves a lot more attention than it seems to have acquired. And I must add in all candor that this judgment would probably not have occurred to me without and before the salutary discipline of our intensive Inerrancy-Genesis discussions in Australia, particularly within our Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations, which led to the fruitful Biblical-Confessional agreement documented in the relevant statements of our 1972 General Synod at Horsham, Victoria. Although I shall be quoting these documents, I do not want to suggest that the unavoidable judgments expressed in the present paper represent any sort of official or unofficial Australian consensus. I speak for myself alone.

Graebner's book on non-fundamentals arose out of the abortive fellowship discussions with the old American Lutheran Church. What bothered Graebner was a tendency to elevate all sorts of exegetical details and inferences to the level of church-divisive doctrine — for example, the thousand years of Revelations 20, the conversion of the Jews, etc. As a way out of this dilemma he drew attention to the time-honored Lutheran scheme of the threefold foundation of the Faith, the substantial, the dogmatic, and the organic or instrumental. The substantial foundation is of course the Triune God Himself and His saving work in Christ. The dogmatic foundation is the Gospel in a nutshell, the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*, justification *propter Christum, sola gratia, sola fide*. This Gospel, however, is not an isolated abstraction, but necessarily presupposes certain articles (e.g., Trinity, Creation, Original Sin, Incarnation) and entails others (Church, Means of Grace), so that to attack any of these is to subvert the Gospel itself. The organic foundation, finally, is the Scriptural Word of God

in its twofold role of source and norm for both *fides qua* (the individual's act of believing, personal, saving faith) and *fides quae* (the objective content of faith, doctrine, theology).

It is clear that the dogmatic foundation is the same as the material principle, and that the organic foundation is the formal principle, which includes the plenary inspiration, authority, inerrancy, clarity, sufficiency, etc., of Scripture. These then are not two (or three) different things, but distinct yet inseparable aspects of the one saving work of God in Christ: the divine-human reality which constitutes and sustains it (substantial foundation), the teaching which describes this reality (dogmatic foundation), and the divine source, authority and power guaranteeing the truth of the teaching and through it communicating the reality itself (organic foundation).

The point of the scheme for church-fellowship is that only what subverts the threefold foundation of the Faith may be regarded as divisive. Walther himself wrote: "The Church has never reached a higher degree of unity than a fundamental one, and only a fanatical chiliast could hope that the Church would ever reach a higher degree."¹

This eminently Biblical, evangelical approach (I Cor. 3:11, 12; Eph. 2:20) fully safeguards the dogmatic substance of the Christian Faith, without fossilizing all exegetical and theological discussion into a rigid immobility. It leaves generous room for responsible differences under the discipline of God's Word. For example, one may be convinced that a certain exegetical opinion (e. g., non-normal Creation days) is dead wrong or a doctrinal formulation clumsy (e. g., the means of grace as the "visible side" of the church), and then one must by all means say so. But this would not threaten the fraternal bonds of church-fellowship, PROVIDED that there is no violation of anything that belongs to the integrity of the dogmatic foundation (the doctrine of the Gospel "in all its articles," *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration*, X, 31) or of the organic foundation (full Biblical authority). On the other hand, of course, the humblest non-fundamental ceases to be that and becomes church-divisive the moment it is asserted in conscious opposition to the Biblical text, for then the organic foundation is denied.

But this "de-militarized" theological discussion zone is no longer spacious enough for Dr. Graebner's successors. With one-sided zeal for the dogmatic foundation, the Seminary document has jettisoned the organic foundation. As a result, the Gospel itself is in principle de-natured.

Having roughly defined some historical and dogmatic reference points, we must note a few general hermeneutical points about the document under discussion. Since that document explicitly intends "to address the issues under discussion in the Synod," which in turn are most comprehensively summarized in President Preus' *Biblical and Confessional Principles* and in his Fact Finding Committee's *Report*, and since the Seminary also explicitly rejects the theology of these documents, it is clear that the *Affirmations and Discussions* are meant as answers, even alternatives to President Preus' documents, and must be so understood.

FURTHER, the *Affirmations* are meant "as assurance to the church that we teach in accord with Article II of Synod's Constitution" in the face of the contrary claim by the Fact Finding Committee. Failure to achieve this stated purpose could have drastic personal and institutional consequences. One must assume therefore that the formulations put their very best foot forward. Their tendency will be maximal, i.e., to say the most that can be said, and to say it as reassuringly as possible, in terms of traditional Missouri Synod thinking. This means that disturbing elements contrary to this intention will tend to be understated, and must therefore be given especial weight whenever they appear. On the other hand, "good" statements appearing only in the *Discussions* but not in the *Affirmations*, must be discounted to some extent, since the *Discussions* do not necessarily represent the "precise wording" which the faculty majority would unanimously accept "as the only or the best way to formulate the answers. We are agreed that other wordings or expressions are not excluded" (*Preamble*).

The document's split-level structure is no doubt meant to suggest that the controversial "questions at issue in the Synod" concern only a secondary, *Discussions*-level, and do not threaten doctrinal agreement where it counts. But no literary partitions can protect the *Affirmations* from the *Discussions*, since the latter really define what is meant, or allowed, by the former.

Finally, charity towards the faculty demands that we accept their good faith with the simplicity of the dove, while charity towards the church compels us also to be wise as serpents in taking account of possibilities like the one reported by the managing editor of the *Concordia Theological Monthly*: "Some weeks ago a trusted friend advised us to stick to broad theological issues in the pages of this journal and to avoid all the pressing present problems in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. 'Fill the church full of Gospel,' he said, 'so that there will be no room left for non-Gospel problems,' " (September, 1972, p. 483).

II. Historical-Critical Methodology

THE validity of the historical-critical approach to Scripture is the basic point at issue in the whole document. Although the matter is not explicitly dealt with until *Discussion Nine*, it permeates and shapes the entire presentation, as we shall see. In fact the document itself illustrates the falsity of the crucial assumption that "in and of itself the so-called 'historical critical' methodology is neutral."

Let us consider *Discussion Nine's* claim that "basically all the techniques associated with 'historical-critical' methodology, such as source analysis, form history, and redaction history, are legitimated by the fact that God chose to use as His written Word human documents written by human beings in human language."

At least four related issues arise here: A) the distinction between the servant-use and the master-use of reason; B) the scholarly validity of representative critical techniques; C) the theological validity of the critical approach; D) the question of controls or limits.

A. Servant-Reason or Master-Reason?

THE talk about neutral "techniques" suggests that the objection to the historical-critical approach arises from an obscurantist inability or unwillingness to exercise responsible scholarship. But no responsible Lutheran doubts that the exegete must make competent use of all relevant scientific equipment in the service of the Biblical text. The principle is not new, and is certainly not the distinctive contribution

of historical criticism, nor the point at which it becomes objectionable. Thus our Australian Genesis statement says:

This does not mean that we reject either reason or scholarship. Quite on the contrary. We hold that it is the function of Biblical interpretation to understand and apply the Bible as a whole and in all its parts. But everyone who takes the Reformation's *sola scriptura* seriously must insist that the proper function of reason, and thus of scholarship, is in every respect *under* and not *over* Scripture—as handmaid, and not as mistress. As emphatically as we reject any use of reason as master or judge over Scripture, so we affirm the fullest use of reason, with all its scholarly tools, as a servant, to understand and make clear what the sacred text says and means.

But the *Discussions* in effect reverse this. When it comes to the proper, servant-use of reason, we are discouraged from drawing substantive inferences from Genesis, since the Biblical materials "speak primarily to our faith rather than our intellect" (*Discussion One*). This false opposition reflects the typically neo-orthodox-existentialist aversion to "Aristotelian" inconveniences like logic, definition, precision, propositions (doctrine!), and clear thinking generally. The irony is that we have here a form of the Thomistic illusion that the Biblical contrast is between grace and *nature* (e.g., reason, the body, matter, and other scapegoats) when actually it is between grace and *sin* (e.g., the rebellious autonomy of reason)!

Yet when it really is a question of reason acting as master and judge over Scripture, in the historical-critical approach as well-nigh universally understood and practiced today the Seminary document yields almost unconditionally, and is firm only in its defense of this yielding! And that is the real issue.

B. How Scholarly?

WHILE nobody objects to genuine scholarship, yielding palpable facts and information, much of what passes for neutral "tools" and "methods" is really nothing of the sort. The *Discussions* nowhere hint at this state of affairs. In fact the "techniques" they list ("source analysis, form history, and redaction history") are particularly good examples of procedures often governed by a minimum of factual evidence and a maximum of imaginative speculation, flavored with a good bit of philosophical bias to boot.

Take that senior sacred cow, the J-E-D-P source hypothesis, which Cyrus Gordon of Brandeis University has, while rejecting it on scientific grounds, aptly styled the "badge of inter-confessional academic respectability."² Professor U. Cassuto, of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, demonstrated in painstaking textual detail the complete untenability of the accepted documentary scheme and of the techniques with which it is deduced.³

Prof. J. W. Montgomery, whose meticulously documented studies are, incredibly, nowhere referred to in the *Discussions'* suggestions "For Further Study," comments:

The use of parallel critical methods in other academic fields has proven so unfruitful that these techniques have been largely discredited outside of biblical scholarship . . . As to the continued presence of "such niggling word-baiting" in biblical criticism, Yamauchi of Rutgers has stated at the close of a recent lecture which has been expanded into an exceedingly important monograph: "If we applied the criterion of 'Divine Names' to Ugaritic, Egyptian, or Arabic texts, we would see that the principle was not valid. I could multiply examples

for all the other criteria of the documentary hypothesis."⁴

And the Liverpool University Orientalist, K. A. Kitchen, is very critical of "the literary-critical theories of the composition of the Pentateuch in particular" which were based ultimately "on the dilettante speculations of the eighteenth century" and "are still dominant in Old Testament studies today."⁵ Kitchen, who brings to bear a fascinating wealth of actual archaeological evidence, complains that the reigning Old Testament scholarship continues to spin its speculations in almost total independence of the known facts:

For, worst of all, the documentary theory in its many variations has throughout been elaborated *in a vacuum*, without any proper reference to other Ancient Oriental literatures to find out whether they had been created in this singular manner. In the eighteenth and earlier part of the nineteenth centuries, of course, no comparative data were available from the Ancient Near East; but from the late nineteenth century onward, Egyptian, Mesopotamian and even West-Semitic material became increasingly available, and the failure of Wellhausen and almost all of his earlier and later contemporaries to heed this material is inexcusable. It is a most serious omission, because—in the forms actually preserved to us in the extant Old Testament—Hebrew literature shows very close external stylistic similarities to the other Ancient Oriental literatures among which (and as part of which) it grew up. Now, nowhere in the Ancient Orient is there anything which is definitely known to parallel the elaborate history of fragmentary composition and conflation of Hebrew literature (or marked by just such criteria) as the documentary hypotheses would postulate. And conversely, any attempt to apply the criteria of the documentary theorists to Ancient Oriental compositions that have known histories but exhibit the same literary phenomena results in manifest absurdities (pp. 114-115).

And then there is that form-critical invention, "*Gemeindetheologie*." The basic idea is that certain things reported in the New Testament never actually happened, but were invented by the preaching, confession, or theology of the early church in response to its own needs. For example: "we know darn well something was happening, maybe not to a group of people standing in a boat watching Jesus, but something was happening somewhere in the life of the early community that made it seem desirable to put in something like this, which is undoubtedly rooted in experience but which also has been embellished."⁶

W. F. Bunge, of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, virtually identifies this approach with "the historical-critical method" which is "indispensable" if we are to "read the literary deposit of early Christianity with comprehension."⁷ The essence of this "comprehension" is that the New Testament is not a report of what actually happened, but a "confessional interpretation." This means, for instance, that Jesus never uttered the great "I am" sayings of St. John's Gospel: "These are the words of the risen Lord speaking through the confession of the church and not the words of the Jesus of history." Here "the post-resurrection theological insights of a particular group within the early church are read back into the history of Jesus of Nazareth."

Now, what genuine scholarly validity attaches to this whole notion of "*Gemeindetheologie*"? Prof. W. Kuenneth of the University of Erlangen refers to Prof. Schade-
wald

of Tuebingen, whom he describes as an "outstandnig Graecist" who knows "the entire literature of antiquity:"

He pointed out that precisely in the New Testament we have before us the best conceivable historical sources. He stated further that there can be no question at all of a production of a "*Gemeindetheologie*." I personally want to designate this popular talk of a "*Gemeindetheologie*" as a modern myth. Schade-
wald made it plain that precisely in the New Testament recollection plays a decisive role. Recollection has an interest in holding on to and preserving verbatim all that Jesus said and did. Therefore there can be no suggestion of a legend at all. If all that is legend, that's about how Schade-
wald puts it, then no scholarly study of ancient history exists at all.⁸

And H. J. Kraus, in the most thorough history known to me of the historical-critical study of the Old Testament, repeatedly draws attention to the decisive influence of philosophical premises, e.g., rationalism, romanticism, idealism, evolutionism, historicism, etc.⁹ To these must be added the existentialism of the New Hermeneutic, which tries to "warm up" the coldly destructive vagaries of "scientific" criticism with yet another massive dose of subjectivism! Montgomery shows that contrary to the fashionable belief, the "vicious circle" hermeneutics of today corresponds not to Luther's exegesis, but precisely to the medieval, tradition-dominated method which he rejected; and that it is the "*sola scriptura*" hermeneutics of orthodoxy which really corresponds to Luther's exegesis!¹⁰

C. Criticism's Hidden Doctrines and Theology

THE preceding points to the heart, soul, and essence of historical criticism: the subjection of Scripture and its content to the magisterial judgment of human reason. It is this *Sachkritik*, the criticism of substance or content according to human, philosophical assumptions, rather than any scholarly refinement, which constitutes the distinguishing feature of the historical-critical approach and methodology. Already in 1805 Johann Philipp Gabler, one of the most influential historical-critical thinkers, put it quite plainly: It is

impossible nowadays to be satisfied with the mere fact that an ancient author reported an event and considered it to be true. It is right to ask and investigate: But is it true? And if it *cannot* have happened like this, then one investigates further: how did the author get the idea? Is something true perhaps at the bottom of it? If so, what? And what prompted him to make the additions? Or is the whole thing only fiction? Deliberate—the invention of a deceiver or a fanatic? Or merely well-intentioned fiction? Philosophical or poetic myth?

And:

A more exact study of nature and especially of man, and a worthier view of God and of his attributes, have spread truer concepts in the whole realm of religion; and these no longer permitted belief in the letter of the Bible.¹¹

This quintessence of the critical orientation, which it would be fatuous to restrict to the "age of rationalism," is completely bagatellized in *Discussion Nine*: "Criticism does not mean sitting in judgment over others but involves making a studied decision on the basis of all available evidence." What a prim Victorian stork-story! If it refers simply to intelligent efforts to determine what the text says and means, then it is quite beside the point, for that is not at issue.

If, however, it means to describe the typical operations of historical-critical methodology, then it is plainly false. For the "studied decision on the basis of all available evidence" involves treating Biblical and non-Biblical "evidence" as equals, so that the latter is in principle "sitting in judgment" over the former!

I DOUBT that one could find a more authoritative definition of criticism than that of Abraham Kuenen's 1880 essay on "Critical Methods." The leading historian of the historical-critical methodology as applied to the Old Testament, takes this essay to represent "the 'methodology' of historical-critical scholarship at the apex of its unfolding."¹² Says Kuenen: "'Criticism' means the art of judging. Very well then, let us envisage the man who bears his name from this his activity, a judge!"¹³ And then he goes on to describe in detail how it is necessary to view all evidence and examine and cross-examine all witnesses impartially (without granting any special status or privilege to Biblical materials!), in order to determine what actually did take place. It is clear that man's reason is judge here, and Scripture, far from being "the only judge, rule, and norm" (*Formula of Concord*), is one among other witnesses at best, and a suspect or defendant at worst. "The biblical witnesses are first and foremost witnesses of a historical process which the 'judge' must reconstruct, because he is dealing—and that is the secret presupposition of all research with Kuenen—with the 'case' of a 'false historiography' in the Old Testament." So Kraus comments, adding that Kuenen's essay represents "the real vital nerve of historical-critical research at the stage of its mighty unfolding," and a "masterpiece" illustrating "the innermost impulse of scientific questing and questioning."¹⁴

And this is precisely the typical approach today. The following recent theses formed the basis for a discussion between the assistants of the Roman Catholic and Protestant theological faculties, respectively, at the University of Munich:

4. If exegesis is to be practised historico-critically, it must use the methods of secular historical science, i.e., criticism which allows only probable judgments, and the principles of analogy and correlation (cf. Troeltsch). Thereby it subjects itself in principle to secular-historical judgment.

6. Historical-critical exegesis presupposes the equal historical value of all sources, i.e., it prescind from the self-witness or the special status of a writing. . . . The biblical books count as ancient near-eastern sources, and the concepts contained in them are ancient near-eastern. . . .

8. From the historical integration into general history there follows the religio-historical integration. Yahweh is a semitic divinity (about whose introduction into Israel the historian may offer conjectures); this applies in principle also to the Theos of the N.T. Phenomena and concepts (e.g. charismatics, kingship, prophecy, discipleship, apostolate; commandments, ethos, prayer, virgin birth, resurrection ascension) are subject to the principles of correlation and analogy. Jesus is a late-Jewish figure. The forms of religion in the biblical texts count, since they developed historically, as syncretistic.

10. Through the abolition of the boundary of the canon for historical research, the concept "unity" or "centre of Scripture" becomes questionable.

13. If historical-critical exegesis subjects its findings to secular-historical judgment [as by definition

it must, cf. thesis 4. K.M.] then the demand to bind it to an ecclesiastical teaching office or to confessional writings, contradicts its very starting point [Ansatz].¹⁵

AGAINST this monolithic critical reality *Discussion Nine* half-heartedly pits the illusion that it is simply a question of getting at "the intended meaning of the written Word of God as we have it." I say "half-heartedly," because the inerrancy of Scripture was surrendered already in *Discussion Eight*, and the critical leaven is at work throughout the document, from *Discussion One's* relativizing of Genesis through *Discussion Three's* dispensation from "an absolute acceptance of each detail of the miracle, precisely as it is reported," to the final denouement in *Discussion Nine*. The surrender of inerrancy can mean only that the interpreter is free to disagree with direct assertions of the Biblical text, and to that extent with "the intended meaning of the written Word of God as we have it." And as Dr. Franzmann points out, even a "conservative" critic like K. Fröer feels free to "interpret against the intention of the evangelist." Comments Franzmann:

a principle, or a method, is not to be applied "conservatively" or "radically"—it should simply be applied consistently. Therefore the more "radical" practitioners of the method can always reproach the more "conservative" ones with inconsistency. It is therefore not unfair to cite examples of a more "radical" use of the method in order to illustrate its tendency and its consequences.¹⁶

It is not surprising therefore that the critical scholar Kraus himself repeatedly stresses the incompatibility of the orthodox doctrine of inspiration with the historical-critical approach, and rejects "the optimistic illusion that the historical-critical study of Scripture is merely an implementation of the Reformation's Scripture-principle."¹⁷

D. Meaningful Controls

No doubt Prof. H. Hummel is right in arguing that it is simplistic to speak of "the historical-critical method," as if there were only one uniform version of it.¹⁸ At the same time, historical-critical methodology, as distinct from this or that particular method, covers, as we have seen, a multitude of sins, the identifiable common denominator of which is the rejection of Biblical authority. This is the *proprium* which distinguishes critical methodology from *bona fide* interpretation. It is therefore doubly wrong of *Discussion Nine* simply to whitewash "so-called historical critical methodology" as such, without any further ado.

Dr. Hummel hits the critical nail on the head when he writes: "It is the presence or absence of the overall *hermeneutical* framework (Scripture interpreting itself) alongside our intensified historical investigations which determines whether or not the latter are simply extensions of the Reformation accent on the 'grammatical sense' or something *toto caelo* different."¹⁹

Exactly. Of obedient exploration of the text we can never have enough. But of the critical elevation of scholarship as master and judge over Scripture, even a little bit is too much. Since, as that master critic, Troeltsch, insisted, the historical-critical methodology "once applied to biblical science and church history, is a leaven which transforms everything, and finally bursts the entire previous form of theological methods,"²⁰ the point is not to keep that leaven down to a small amount, or to muddle through with a moderate use of it, but to exclude it completely and in principle.

AND Dr. Hummel's essay indicates the sort of tough-minded specifics which are necessary for a meaningful dissertation of Biblical and confessional authority here. Amazingly enough, his highly competent and relevant contributions do not even rate a mention in the Seminary document's bibliographical notes, while much less significant articles do. Dr. Franzmann likewise has published uniquely preceptive papers on the subject, which, like his essay on "The Hermeneutical Dilemma,"²¹ are not mentioned (although two anti-traditional pieces in the same issue of the *Concordia Theological Monthly* as the "Dilemma" article, are listed. To be fair, it must be said that Dr. Franzmann's exquisite "Seven Theses on Reformation Hermeneutics" is listed "For Further Study,"²² as is Dr. R. Preus' splendidly comprehensive systematic analysis, "Notes on the Inerrancy of Scripture."²³ But their content is ignored by the *Discussions*, which proceed as if these and other trenchant contributions by responsible theologians simply didn't exist. Our Australian Church's 1972 "Doctrinal Statement" on Genesis indicates, I believe, the kind of specifics which are necessary:

We therefore find ourselves opposed to many assumptions of "higher" criticism, assumptions which have increasingly shaped the methods and conclusions of Biblical scholarship in the last two hundred years. Some of these assumptions are:

- a) That the Biblical documents must be treated in principle like all other historical documents, without regard for their claim to inspiration and authority;
- b) That science, history, and other disciplines are valid and legitimate norms and standards by which the truthfulness and reliability of Biblical statements can and must be judged;
- c) That the miraculous aspects of the witness of the Biblical writers may be discounted as an element of primitive culture;
- d) That the Apostles' and even our Blessed Lord's Own understanding and interpretation of particular texts of Scripture may in principle be regarded as defective or questionable, and as subject to progressive correction by subsequent Biblical scholarship.

Such assumptions as these constitute an attack not only on the apostolicity of the Church (Eph. 2:20), but on the very Lordship of Christ. For this reason we reject them unconditionally.

Discussion Nine, by contrast, speaks blandly about Christian or Lutheran or "reverent" presuppositions, but says nothing more specific about them than that they "include: 1) the centrality of the Gospel in the Scriptures; 2) the distinction between the Law which always accuses and the Promise which always assures; 3) the Spirit's gift of faith as the prerequisite to receive the Promise and obey the commandments of God." In terms of the actual issues these formulations are the very soul of vagueness. They restrain historical criticism about as much as a net restrains water. What is worse, the most radical Bultmannite could embrace them, if not from critical necessity, then at least with *hermeneutical* relish!

Incredibly, the "presuppositions" do not even mention the authority of Scripture! The sentence, "The Scriptures are in a unique sense the written Word of God and deserve due reverence," occurs, but nothing concrete follows

from it (indeed, the next sentence begins with "But . . ."). The divine authority of Scripture seems to have nothing whatever to say to the historical-critical enterprise. On the contrary, "all the techniques" of the latter are simply declared "legitimated by the fact that God chose to use as His written Word human documents written by human beings in human language." But this is like deriving a court's powers and jurisdiction from the human rights of the judge as a private person! What distinguishes Scripture from other books surely is not its humanity, but its divinity, which establishes a qualitative "distinction between the holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments and all other writings" (*Formula of Concord, Epitome, Rule and Norm, 7. Discussion Nine's* oddly adoptionist language—as if God found ready-made human documents and then decided to "use" them as His Word!—falls far short of this.

IF Biblical authority in the exegetical enterprise is to be more than a phrase, it must involve inerrancy "in the normal sense of freedom from all error and contradiction, 'factual' as well as 'theological,'" as our 1972 Australian statement, "The Theses of Agreement and Inerrancy," puts it. The quotation marks around "factual" and "theological" mean to suggest that this popular opposition is rejected. The document also refuses to separate divine from human elements in Scripture, confessing instead the inseparable "rich complexity of the Holy Scriptures as Word of God in all its parts and aspects and also word of man in all its parts and aspects." As Dr. Hummel puts it, so succinctly: "the most elementary faithfulness to the Lutheran Reformation requires that any and every dichotomization of Scripture be uncompromisingly rejected."²⁴

The relevant thrust of inerrancy is that while it is wrong to treat the Bible "as though its divine authority rendered historical investigation unimportant or irrelevant," it is also wrong "to hold that what according to clear biblical statements 'actually is or actually happened,' may be regarded as" something which "actually is *not* or actually did *not* happen" (Australian Inerrancy statement, rejections 7 and 2 respectively).

But the *Discussions*, having yielded on inerrancy, avoid specifics and maintain a *laissez faire* stance towards historical criticism. St. Louis Prof. E. Krentz, for instance, is convinced that *sola scriptura* "is not in any sense a hermeneutical principle that determines *methods* in interpreting this single authority . . . It is not contrary to any theory of sources."²⁵ There are indications in the article that Dr. Krentz doesn't really mean quite what he actually says here, but as it stands the formulation is wrong. It is precisely, the characteristic *methods* of historical criticism which, as we have seen, *required* the abandonment of Biblical authority, in obedience to alternative dogmas, i.e., those of the Enlightenment. If *sola scriptura* is to express more than a meaningless ceremonial reigning, with the "ministers of the crown" doing exactly as they please in the crown's name, then the customs ministry, as it were, must strictly enforce the royal regulations for all "methodological" imports. If the mere label "methods" automatically guarantees diplomatic immunity from inspection, it will soon be used to smuggle in subversive doctrine! Dr. R. Preus' restriction is surely both methodological and necessary: "Specifically, any literary genre that would in itself be immoral or involve deceit or error is not compatible with Biblical inerrancy and is not to be found in Scripture, for example, myth, etiological tale, midrash, legend or saga according to the usual designation of these forms."²⁶

THE trouble is that the antiseptic scholarly jargon tends to hide, sometimes intentionally, the real theological issue of faith vs. unbelief. Nowhere is this truer than in Dr. Krentz' example of source theories. J,E,D, and P, and their datings seem such demure methodological technicalities. But when the great critic Friedrich Delitzsch as a student heard his famous Old Testament professor lecture on Deuteronomy and date it seven centuries after Moses, he saw the disturbing implications. Visiting his professor that very same day, he blurted out "So then the 5th Book of Moses is what is called a forgery? The reply was: 'For God's sake! That's no doubt true, but one can't say a thing like that!' This word, especially his 'for God's sake!' keeps ringing in my ears till the present day . . . For I have never understood why one should not, in such serious matters, also express that which is true."²⁷

Since authority without "teeth" is no authority, *bona fide* confession of Biblical authority must have concrete hermeneutical and methodological "teeth," even for source theories, along the lines, for instance, of the Australian Genesis statement:

it is contrary to the form of sound doctrine . . .
b) to reduce the stature of Moses, in opposition to the New Testament (St. John 1:17; the Transfiguration), by holding that the Pentateuch is not essentially Mosaic, or by questioning the historical value of what the Pentateuch attributes to him, or by denying that he wrote of Christ (John 5:45,46); c) to throw doubt in general on the historicity of the persons and facts mentioned in the Pentateuch.

Quite startling is *Discussion Nine's* assertion that "the fundamental principles of interpretation" including "'Scripture interprets Scripture' . . . are not laid down in the Scriptures. Furthermore, these rules are not unique to the study of the Scriptures, but apply to the interpretation of any ancient document." This is completely un-Lutheran and untheological. Lutheran theology²⁸ has always insisted on Scripture's self-interpretation because of its unique status as a sole authority. In this strict sense the rule does not apply simply to documents in general (note *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration*, VII,41!). But in the Bible's case there simply is no alternative if "no human being's writings dare be put on a par with it, but . . . everything must be subjected to it" (F.C., S.D., Rule and Norm 9). As the divine light and lamp (Ps. 119:105) Scripture must give and not receive illumination. It is a matter of God's Word versus man's (Matt. 15:9) "private interpretation" (II Peter 1:20).

III. The Organic Foundation: Solus Christus— Sola Scriptura

A. Inspiration/Inerrancy

UNDER pressure from its prior commitment to historical criticism, *Discussion Eight* gives up the inerrancy of Scripture. The issue is defined quite unmistakably: "Does the inspired character of the Scriptures guarantee . . . the complete inerrancy of all materials in the Scriptures?" Although the answer is not equally straight-forward, since it quibbles about "twentieth century standards of factuality" and "this kind of 'inerrancy'" (as if a disguised efficacy were another kind!), it is quite clearly negative.

Come to think of it, our age of mass-mediated lies and propaganda on an unprecedented scale is hardly in a position to give itself superior airs about its "standards of factuality." On the other hand, St. Luke already had rather solid stan-

dards (1:1-4), as also did St. John (I John 1:1-3), not to mention St. Paul's total realism about the difference between fact and wishful thinking (I Cor. 15. Even Bultmann grudgingly admits that here at least Paul "wants to secure the miracles of the resurrection as a historical event by enumerating the eye-witnesses."²⁹) Nor is there anything vague or foggy about standards of factuality in a popular 16th century piece like Luther's explanation of the Eighth Commandment in his *Large Catechism*.

The conflict is not between antiquity and modernity at all, but between faith and unbelief. No doubt those medieval Popes of whom the *Apology* says that "many openly ridicule all religions, or if they accept anything, accept only what agrees with human reason and regard the rest as mythology, like the tragedies of the poets" (VII/VIII, 27), also appealed to superior standards of factuality. So it is not from any lack of sophistication in this regard that Luther and with him the Lutheran Church give the only possible definition of inerrancy: "I AND MY NEIGHBOR CAN ERR AND DECEIVE, BUT GOD'S WORD CAN NEITHER ERR NOR DECEIVE" (*Large Catechism*, Baptism, 57).

ALTHOUGH there is even among some conservatives a certain dissatisfaction with the term "inerrancy," no one has as yet suggested a better one. That that concept "inerrant" is not made explicit in the compressed axiom of John 10:35, as some have urged, is merely a technicality, since the concept "incontrovertible" or "uncontradictable" (which must include "inerrant") certainly is the major thrust of that text, as Luther,³⁰ Gerhard,³¹ and all other honest exegetes insist.

But of course the real argument is not about the term, but about the substance. And the challenge often takes not the form of a direct frontal attack but that of a bored indifference, which focuses only on the empirical-inductive aspects of Biblical difficulties, and regards it as unimportant whether these should be called "errors" or "problems." I have never seen a more trenchant reply to this thinking than Prof. Hummel's: "No doubt, the difficulties and the possible solutions in and of themselves often remain the same, regardless of what one calls them, but *hermeneutically* it does ultimately make a world of difference whether they are construed as God's inability to reveal adequately or as man's inability to understand completely!"³² This, in a nutshell, is the real theological burden—and necessity—of inerrancy.

Inerrancy then is an instant litmus-test which shows whether the term "inspiration" is being used seriously and meaningfully, or merely emotively-rhetorically. For to distinguish within Scripture between what is and what is not correct is obviously to distinguish between what is and what is not God's Word. Conversely, to say that something is God's Word is to say that it is beyond human correction, i.e., inerrant. But to say that something is both God's inspired, authoritative Word, and at the same time in error and subject to human correction, is to use language without meaning. The effect of the following sample is distinctly lunatic, even in the original German: "Since [St. Luke's] interpretation of the parable [8:4-15] is not factually correct [*sachge-maess*], it dare not determine the sermon. But since it is, after all, written there, it must also be heard and taken seriously as God's Word!"³³

SINCE inerrancy is rejected, *Discussion Eight* can manage only a half-hearted non-definition of inspiration: "Accordingly the inspiration of the written Word pertains to the effective power of the Scriptures to bring men and women to salvation

through the Gospel. We affirm, therefore, that the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God." Why not "therefore" affirm, in exactly the same sense, that the Catechisms are the inspired Word of God? We have here a confusion of a thing itself with its ultimate purpose. And inerrancy is redefined in exactly the same way. But that is as disastrous as defining marriage, for instance, as "pertaining" to the happiness of two people—although the latter is undoubtedly a correct statement of the basic purpose of marriage. The open invitation to chaos is obvious, and no less so in the case of inspiration/inerrancy.

There are other confusions on inspiration in *Discussion Eight*. It is rightly admitted that II Tim. 3:16 "actually applies the term 'inspired' to the Sacred Scriptures as such." In other words, the primary object of inspiration is the Biblical text itself, not the persons of the writers. But in the very next paragraph we are told not to "focus on the how of inspiration" since "throughout the Scriptures little is said about precisely how the prophets or apostles were inspired." The intent, transparently, is to sanction a vague, ill-defined use of the term "inspiration," while sweeping all inconvenient doctrinal precision under the carpet of the "how." The fact of course is that full, verbal, plenary inspiration belongs not to any speculative "how," but to the exegetical and dogmatic "what" ("all Scripture")!

Equally ill-starred is the attempt to construe an implied "therefore" between verses 15 and 16: "All of this is true because, first of all, the Scriptures are able through the Spirit, 'to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus' (II Tim. 3:15)." If this is an example of historical-critical exegesis (new hermeneutics, more likely), it again illustrates the cavalier straight-jacketing of the text into existentialist preconceptions. No respectable grammatical and syntactical analysis would tolerate such a procedure. If anything, verse 16 gives the reason for v. 15, rather than the other way round.

B. Gospel vs. Scripture

WITH the abandonment of meaningful notions of inspiration and inerrancy, the whole Scripture principle of Lutheran theology evaporates, as Dr. C. F. W. Walther clearly saw:

It is absolutely necessary that we maintain the doctrine of inspiration as taught by our orthodox dogmatians. If the possibility that Scripture contained the least error were admitted, it would become the business of man to sift the truth from the error. That places man over Scripture, and Scripture is no longer the source and norm of doctrine. Human reason is made the *norma* of truth, and Scripture is degraded to the position of a *norma normata*. The least deviation from the old inspiration doctrine introduces a rationalistic germ into theology and infects the whole body of doctrine.³⁴

To St. Louis Professor C. S. Meyer it seems that Walther's doctrine of the Word "was not wholly Christocentric but tended toward biblicism."³⁵ To Walther's successors at the Seminary, the Scripture principle is simply no longer comprehensible. By an odd oversight, the term "*sola scriptura*" does not even occur in the document, although *sola gratia* and *sola fide* do, and although it is on the doctrine of Scripture that reassurance is especially needed.

But even if that old shibboleth had been mentioned, it would have been but a perfunctory shadow of its former self, as "reinterpreted" as inspiration and inerrancy. For the *Discussions* take the honor of the *sola* from Scripture and bestow it on something else. They distinguish between

"Gospel" and "Scripture," and are designed as "a demonstration of how we employ the Gospel as the governing principle in our theology." The *Preamble*—it isn't clear whether this is "affirmed" or merely "discussed"—pointedly asks:

"Is the Gospel alone sufficient as the ground of faith and the governing principle for Lutheran theology? Or is something else required as a necessary condition?" The "something else" here is obviously the same as *Discussion Four's* "even if that something else be the Bible itself." Having set up the choice between "the Gospel alone" and "something else" (Scripture as such), the *Preamble* decides: "any effort, however subtle, to supplement the Gospel, so that it is no longer the sole ground of our faith or the governing principle for our theology is to be rejected as un-Lutheran, contrary to our confession."

The formal principle then is not Scripture as such but "the Gospel" abstracted from it. While Scripture is once or twice called "the norm for faith and life," it is clearly demoted to a subsidiary *norma normata*, subject to another and higher "governing principle": "The Gospel gives the Scriptures their normative character, not vice versa" (*Discussion Four*); "the Gospel is the norm . . . of the Scriptures . . ." *Discussion Six*. Any genuinely objective scholarship would admit that what the document here condemns as un-Lutheran and "contrary to our confession," is of the very bone and marrow not just of this or that great Lutheran theologian, but of the Lutheran Confessions themselves:

IN THIS WAY THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE HOLY SCRIPTURE OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS AND ALL OTHER WRITINGS [including quintessence-of-Gospel documents like Creeds and Catechisms! K. M.] IS MAINTAINED, AND HOLY SCRIPTURE REMAINS THE ONLY JUDGE, RULE, AND NORM ACCORDING TO WHICH AS THE ONLY TOUCHSTONE ALL DOCTRINES SHOULD AND MUST BE UNDERSTOOD AND JUDGED AS GOOD OR EVIL, RIGHT OR WRONG (*Formula of Concord, Epitome, Rule and Norm 7*).

It is very clear then just how far left the pendulum has swung since the days of Theodore Graebner. He strongly maintained the organic foundation, the Scripture principle, citing N. Hunnius' conviction that one might deny certain non-fundamentals without loss of saving faith "so long only as he cannot perceive their foundation in Scripture."³⁶ And the second thesis of the *Chicago Statement* insists: "We affirm our faith in the great Lutheran principle of the inerrancy, certainty, and all-sufficiency of Holy Writ. WE THEREFORE DEPLORE A TENDENCY IN OUR SYNOD TO SUBSTITUTE HUMAN JUDGMENTS, SYNODICAL RESOLUTIONS, OR OTHER SOURCES OF AUTHORITY FOR THE SUPREME AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE."

WHAT seemed bold then, seems positively reactionary now, side by side with the 1972 *Discussions*, which have joined the critical revolution against inerrancy!

It is a pity that the *Statement's* original thrust of "back to the text!" came to be twisted into a doctrinal dismantling programme. Yet the one man in Missouri whose contributions have probably faced the challenge most constructively, never wavered in his allegiance to strict Biblical authority. Although the depth and awareness of Stoeckhardt's generation should not be underestimated, the *Concordia Theological*

Monthly's editorial tribute to Dr. Franzmann is no doubt quite valid for recent times:

He was among the first to introduce genuine historical awareness to our church's study of Holy Scripture and thus enabled us to break out of an interpretive methodology that read the sacred record as if it were merely a collection of dogmatic propositions. But at the same time he constantly opposed his intuitive feeling for the rich poetic quality of Biblical language to the equally arid pedantry of mere historicising exegesis.³⁷

Nor is it merely "intuitive feeling," as a certain anti-dogmatic bias would have it. The fact is that while Dr. Franzmann has effectively counteracted a certain dry, doctrinaire schematism, he has always consistently continued to oppose the fashionable devaluation of Biblical authority: "The interpreter is not critic . . . There is no place where the interpreter can stand (if he is acting in *mimesis* of the apostle) and exert critical leverage."³⁸ Taken seriously, this cuts the ground from under the whole conception of the *Discussions*!

C. Formal and Material Principles

THE writers of the *Discussions* no doubt believe that they have, with Luther and the New Testament, liberated the Gospel itself, the material principle, from a false, scholastic-intellectualistic dependence on the formal principle (*sola scriptura*), so that the Gospel may now stand on its own feet.

But the real opposition comes not from the material principle at all but from the demands of historical criticism. It is reason exercising "critical leverage" against a misunderstood formal principle, under cover of a misunderstood material principle:

Any tendency to make the doctrine of the inspiration or the inerrancy of the Scriptures a prior truth which guarantees the truth of the Gospel or gives support to our faith is sectarian. The Gospel gives the Scriptures their normative character, not vice versa. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone, not through faith in Christ and something else, even if that something else be the Bible itself (*Discussion Four*).

The main fallacies here are: 1) It is misleading to make it seem that inerrancy is being rejected only as a "prior truth," when in fact the argument is about whether it is a valid truth at all; 2) the term "prior truth" is equivocal: it could mean "prior" in several senses, some right, some wrong. As part of God's objective act in Christ, Biblical inerrancy certainly is ANTE ET EXTRA NOS (before and outside us), and thus "gives support to our faith." But if it suggests something constructed somehow independently of faith, by rational proof, then it is an irrelevant straw-man, representing not even the old orthodox dogmatists, but only the Wolffian-rationalist precursors of historical-critical methodology! 3) the phrase "normative character" by-passes and confuses the vital difference between the objective, "prior" fact of the Bible's authority (normative authority), and its power to convince people of this fact as part of Christian faith (causative authority); 4) the "not vice versa" is clearly false, Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 5) without a historical-critical abortion of its meaning, the statement that "the Gospel gives the Scriptures their normative character" must imply inerrancy; 6) Christ nowhere allows a contrast, in principle, between faith in Him, and faith in His direct (Matt. 24:35) or mediated (John 15:20) Word; 7) the bare minimum of what is necessary for salvation is not a source or norm for doctrine. The thief on the cross was saved

without Baptism, but this does not mean that the doctrine of Baptism is a superfluous luxury in theology.

THE confusion is spelled out in great detail by St. Louis Prof. E. H. Schroeder.³⁹ He alleges that in the 1954 book, *The Religious Bodies of America*, the late Prof. F. E. Mayer "completely reversed" his 1937 stand that as Schroeder puts it, "the material principle follows from and is dependent upon the formal principle in principle!" But apart from an improved balance, there is not the slightest difference in principle between Mayer's 1937 and 1954 positions.

What Schroeder takes as evidence of a false "dependence" is simply Mayer's point that in contrast to Rome and Calvin, Luther did not impose a material principle on Scripture, but got his *sola gratia* from Scripture itself! And this is vital. Law/Gospel or justification is not some kind of *a priori* Lutheran bias read into Scripture (that would be sectarian!), but the central Biblical demand, read out of the normative text. It is therefore misleading to describe this inner-Biblical stress as a "critical judgment,"⁴⁰ as if it came from without. The popular habit of relying on the Confessions as an hermeneutical antidote of the historical-critical destruction of Biblical authority is totally misconceived, and reverses the roles of Scriptures and Confessions. To believe and accept something just because it is "Lutheran," i.e., taught by Luther or the Confessions, is fundamentally un-Lutheran and anti-Lutheran (*Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration Rule and Norm, 5*)!

The real gulf of "complete reversal" must be placed not between Mayer, 1937 and Mayer, 1954, but between Mayer, 1954, who accepts, in Schroeder's own citation, "the absolute authority of the Scriptures" and "the Bible as Christ's inerrant and final word," and the *Discussions*, 1972, which accept nothing of the sort. Despite the earlier one-sidedness at Bad Boll, at least as quoted by Schroeder, Mayer in his 1954 book holds strictly to the formal principle, and insists that "when speaking of the material principle of theology, Lutherans do not have in mind a basic principle according to which a body of doctrines may be developed. The material principle of Lutheran theology is in reality only a synopsis and summary of the Christian truth."⁴¹ The *Discussions* follow precisely the approach which Mayer rejects: the formal principle is given up, and the material, "the Gospel alone," becomes instead "the governing principle for Lutheran theology!" Mayer insists on the Lutheran axiom: "THE WORD OF GOD SHALL ESTABLISH ARTICLES OF FAITH AND NO ONE ELSE, NOT EVEN AN ANGEL" (*Smalcald Articles, II/II.15*.) The *Discussions* in effect reverse this into: "The articles of faith shall establish the Word of God, and nothing else, not even the Bible!"

TO top it all off, Schroeder even projects the confusion into Francis Pieper's mind, who is said to be "of two minds about the question," since he insists on the necessity of both inerrancy and the Law/Gospel distinction. This is supposed to create the problem of "how both inerrancy and the distinction are the one articulus stantis et cadentis Christianae."⁴² But the conflict is just as spurious as that between "Christ alone" and "faith alone" or between "faith alone" and the means of grace. Not everything that is necessary to theology thereby becomes "the one articulus." If "the acceptance of doctrine about an inerrant Bible has no necessary connection to salvation," neither does such mere "acceptance of doctrine" about the Blessed Trinity. Not even "the one articulus" saves if it is merely intellectually accepted as doctrine. And of Bultmann, who denies every substantive doctrine, Gloege says that his "basic theme is rooted in

Luther's distinction between Law and Gospel."⁴³ Is he therefore the theological apex of Lutheranism?

In Eph. 2:20 ("the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone") the substantial, dogmatic, and organic foundations, or the formal and material principles, subsist in perfect, harmonious "interpenetration." There is no conflict or rivalry here, but "Christ teaches (about) Christ most purely" (Luther). No Word but Christ's—and no Christ but the Word's! Full apostolic-prophetic authority is not some optional "extra" (e.g., an irrelevant "accuracy of ancient historians," *Discussion Five!*) but part and parcel of God's one and indivisible saving act in Christ. And neither the "offensive" humility of the Incarnation (Matt. 11:2-6; John 6:42) nor the corresponding human-historical concreteness of the Biblical text may be surrendered to the profanations of secular-critical thought. Note therefore how the Lutheran Confessions insist not only on the centrality of the Gospel, but also on the total authority of the whole Scripture, commending Abraham because "he gave God the honor of truthfulness" and refused to evade the plain meaning of God's Word through "a tolerable and loose interpretation," despite the fact that "these words were patently contrary not only to reason and to divine and natural law but also to the eminent article of faith concerning the promised seed, Christ" (*Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, VII, 46!*)

FINALLY, it is pure dilettantism to prattle about Law and Gospel while wrecking Biblical authority. It is precisely the application of Law and Gospel which necessitates the kind of doctrinal certainty which only clear divine authority—the formal principle!—can provide. "It is inherent in man to despise God and to doubt his Word with its threats and promises" (*Apology, IV, 35*). And faith is not an easy optimism which readily believes itself forgiven or is satisfied with hearsay or theological catch-phrases. Only total Gospel-certitude can reassure anyone in the wake of seriously applied Law. Therefore "good consciences cry for the truth and proper instruction from God's Word, and to them death is not as bitter as it is to doubt in one point" (*Apology, XII, 129; German*). Faith must have "a very definite Word of God" (*Apology IV, 262*), of which it can be sure that it is not illusion or "commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). Only the divinely-given apostolic-prophetic Scripture, "written that you may believe" (John 20:31), can ultimately support such assurance. But note that this is *not* a demand for "rational proof!" Faith takes God at His Word—that is its nature. But it must have and be sure of that Word. It is this totally Christ-centered, Biblical, confessional, and pastoral concern for spiritual-doctrinal certainty, explained in the fourth lecture of Walther's much-touted but little-heeded book on *Law and Gospel*, which demands what C. S. Meyer misunderstands as Walther's "biblicism."

Much of this discussion has moved in the area of *prolegomena*, i.e., the very nature and first principles of theology. As Luther comments on Gal. 5:9: "In philosophy, if a small error is made in the beginning, a very great error comes of it in the end. So in theology a small error overturns the whole doctrine."⁴⁴ How much more a tissue of big errors in first principles! And today it is the most basic axioms and foundations that are under attack. The whole crisis could be called the "Prolegomenistic Controversy." It is therefore theologically incredible, however understandable it might be church-politically, that a Seminary President can dismiss *prolegomena* as of secondary importance!⁴⁵ On the contrary, this is where the meaning and value of everything that follows is decided. (The *Formula of Concord* already prefaces

its numbered articles with an introductory section, which treats of Scripture, Confession, and their correlation). Prof. Kuenneth rightly says that today the Devil uses not so much "great might" as "deep guile" in seducing theologians and church-leaders away from the very foundations:

The same familiar biblical words, names, and concepts which are used by existentialist theology, do not mean the same thing, but have another content . . . Bultmann was once asked if he considered it warranted to formulate a new Creed in place of the Apostles' Creed. He said: NO, that isn't necessary at all, since the new formulations can't be believed either . . . The boundless confusion which arises out of such a theological posture is incalculable. People speak of the Creed, but don't believe one sentence of it.⁴⁶

All the talk about "the saving event" then becomes, as G. Bornkamm has put it, a mere "tissue of significances, it dissolves into a mere SIGNIFICAT and has lost the force of the EST."⁴⁷ This dissolution is the necessary and predictable end-result of the denial of the organic foundation, or the formal principle.

IV. The Dogmatic Foundation: Solus Christus—Sola Gratia, Sola Fide

THE Gospel, agreement in which is necessary for the true unity of the Church (C.A. VII), is not an isolated abstraction or slogan, but involves Christian doctrine "in all its articles" (*Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, X,31*). Three of the four Gospels formally trace the evangel back to the beginnings of Genesis: Matthew to Abraham, Luke to Adam, and John to cosmic creation. We shall follow the Trinitarian arrangement of the *Affirmations*.

A. The First Article

THE question of the existence of angels touches the Christ-center of the Faith at three points: the formal principle, which will not allow angels to be dismissed as literary devices or aspects of "the theological machinery of the Jews;"⁴⁸ the implications for the Fall; and the reality of angelic and demonic activity in the redemptive life, teaching, and ministry of our Lord Himself. Since this doctrinal concern was explicitly raised by the Fact Finding Committee,⁴⁹ it should have been clarified in the Seminary document. The *Affirmations* do not mention angels, and the *Discussions* use the term once in passing. The term "demonic forces" or "powers" occurs three times, but usually refers to things like racism. (At the same time there is a curious emphasis not on the "one blood" of Acts 17:26, but on a concreated "identity" of "races" [*Discussion Seven*]).

Genesis 1 is placed, in principle, on the same level as "the minds of scientists, the imagination of poets, and the faith of worshippers for centuries" straining "with human words to describe God creating through His Word;" except that the "biblical men of faith," though "operating with the same limitations of human language in a given culture, were moved by the Spirit to portray the creative work of God in diverse ways" (*Discussion One*).

In other words, there is no real doctrine of creation at all in the old sense, but only a series of "diverse" Biblical "pictures," though these are sometimes given the public relations title of "descriptions." And of course Scripture is "not a textbook on science." But to say that "any discussion of the relationship of biblical pictures of creation to scientific theories is secondary," is going too far. In our cultural context it amounts to kowtowing to the "scientific theories" on behalf of the "biblical pictures."

WE have here a facile evasion of three stubborn facts: 1) As Hartlich and Sachs show in their significant monograph, the "surrender of the historical-factual" aspect of Gen. 1-3 was due not to any textual considerations, but to the incompatibility of Genesis with the alleged "newly won scientific and historical discoveries concerning the initial state of the world and of mankind."⁵⁰ 2) The reigning "scientific theories" of origins are to a surprising degree extra-scientific and even anti-scientific.⁵¹ The mainspring of evolutionism is not empirical observation but anti-theistic bias;⁵² it is in short a philosophical rationalization of sinful man's instinctive flight from God (Rom. 1:18-23). 3) The ever-valid Word of God in Genesis is not interpreted but evaded if it is allowed to demythologize only safely dead divinities like Marduk and Tiamat, and not also those prospering twin gods of modern evolutionary mythology: Time and Chance! Human guess-work must not be granted even the appearance of equality with, let alone precedence over, divine truth: "In this confused age the Church must reflect serene confidence in Genesis as the Creator's own account of what happened in the beginning" (Lutheran Church of Australia: *Doctrinal Statement on Genesis*).

Discussion One's approach is in fact hard to distinguish from that of Gabler, one of the 18th century rationalist founders of the historical-critical methodology: "... the first document [of Genesis] was an old poetic picture and the second an old philosophical myth.—Nothing in it is divine truth except the sentence: God is the Originator of the whole world.—It would be quite contrary to the intention of the Bible to determine scientific data from it."⁵³

Discussion Two extends this approach to Adam and Eve, whom "many within our Synod" take to be "two specific individuals known as Adam and Eve," but "others" don't. Of course it is not stated as bluntly as Prof. W. Bartling's famous outburst: "One thing they caught most of us on is 'Were Adam and Eve historical persons?' I don't know. I don't think so. It is not important."⁵⁴

THE claim that all this is purely a matter of "differences of opinion about the kind of literature involved," and not about the "doctrinal content of the passage" is demonstrably false. In his massively Biblical-evangelical essay on inspiration and proto-history Prof. W. M. Oesch writes of Genesis:

This is to be heard, instead of preventing the hearing by riddling about how this divine revelation might have been invented by men. The statements, especially about creation, the original state, and the fall, are indissolubly connected with the saving New Testament message, yes, it is just here that the Old and New Testaments stand together as one front in such a way that they can be rejected only together.⁵⁵

Rom. 5 and I Cor. 15 alone establish an indissoluble nexus between Genesis and the very heart of the Gospel:

Clearly therefore the factual-historical framework of the Genesis narrative is the indispensable foundation not only for the history of the People of God which follows, but for the very Incarnation and Redemption. Within this framework figurative elements are no doubt to be found. But we must reject all interpretations which in any way undermine the facticity of the framework itself, e.g., the suggestion that the creation and fall of Adam and Eve

may be taken to represent not actual persons and events, but timeless myths of parables of what happens to every man (*Australian Genesis Statement*).

Having, with others, devoted "blood, sweat, and tears" to this whole matter for years, I was surprised and delighted subsequently to find Dr. Hummel's succinct and independent formulation, which parallels rather closely one of the major concerns and conclusions of our Australian discussions: "there seems no way around the argument that the Adam-Christ typology (not mere analogy!), as well as, in a way, the entire *ordo salutis*, makes a historical element (in the ordinary sense of the term) a *sine qua non* for both Adam and the Fall."⁵⁶ Amazingly, this superbly reasoned essay is not listed "for further study" in the *Discussions*, although two far less significant articles in the same issue of the *Concordia Theological Monthly* are cited.

The whole scheme of sacrificing the history while retaining the idea, i.e., "the truth about Everyman . . . and every woman," is deeply anti-Biblical. It is the worst feature of that very "Greek" approach, about which existentialists of all descriptions are forever huffing and puffing. There seems to be no recognition of the doctrinal problems involved: "This sinfulness is present in every individual from the beginning of his existence as a human being and persists throughout his life." Was there then never a state of sinlessness, from which man fell? If there was, then this is obviously not a "truth about Everyman" today. But if there was not, what becomes of the Fall? Or why does everyone become sinful now? If Adam is "Everyman," do we all start out sinless? True, there is a reference to the fact that in "Romans 5 . . . Paul states that sin and death enter the world through one man . . ." But how can this be brought into harmony with the sacrifice of Adam's historicity?

B. The Second Article

THE second set of *Affirmations* seems to me to be the most explicit of the three. Christ is affirmed to be "our Lord and our God." Normally one would not query this further. Since *Discussion Five* however suggests W. Bouman's essay on "History and Dogma in Christology"⁵⁷ for further study, it is necessary to point out that this essay tends towards a dangerous functionalism which would make the term "God" meaningless. Bouman's criticism of Article VII of the *Formula of Concord* is far more substantive than he admits. If taken literally and seriously, Bouman's key contention—that a critically "stringent" historical investigation of what Jesus actually said and did "defines what the church is saying when it confesses that Jesus, the man, is God"—is heretical. Clearly when St. John calls Christ "God" in the first verse of his Gospel, he is not saying that the definition of the term "God" depends on the history which follows—quite apart from the fact that a "stringent" historical study of the critical type would disallow most of it anyway! And Bouman suggests that it is the divinity, not just the humanity of Christ, which is to be "defined" in this way.

Now, take just such a "stringent" investigation of St. Mark's Gospel. Prof. J. S. Setzer argues that an examination of Mark's "Petrine stratum" shows that "Jesus' own christology was adoptionistic"—in the sense that "there is nothing to be heard about a second person of a divine trinity, nothing of a virgin birth" or "about the descent of a heavenly being to become Messiah. We hear, rather, about a marvelous but human child of God."⁵⁸ Now, is this an example of how stringent historical investigation defines what we mean by saying that Jesus is God? Since "all the tech-

niques associated with 'historical-critical' methodology" are "legitimated" (*Discussion Nine*), what is wrong with Setzer's technique? Would Bouman exclude it? If so, how and why? And how would the *Affirmations* and *Discussions* protect their confession that Jesus is God from this sort of "definition" by stringent historical investigation? To this sort of probing, in terms of relevant current issues, the document is as unresponsive as the Sphinx.

IN the vital matter of messianic prophecy, the historical-critical commitments of the *Discussions* again show themselves to be something less and other than objective, neutral tools. *Discussion Six* rightly stresses the importance of typology and it avoids the untenable extreme of insisting on a rather specific understanding of the content of the divine Promise on the part of the average believer under the Old Covenant. After all, even the Apostles, after three years of seminary plus the Resurrection, were still rather wide of the mark (Acts 1:6). It was only when the Spirit-fulness of Pentecost broke in upon them that they were released from the politicizing misconceptions to which the World Council of Churches has now returned with such a vengeance!

But the other, much more dangerous extreme of **denying** direct, predictive messianic prophecy altogether, seems to worry the *Discussions* not at all. To say that "in the light of their fulfilment a new dimension is added to the meaning of Old Testament promises of God" fails to do justice to the New Testament's understanding of the Old. It suggests not so much exegesis as eisegesis, reading things into the text that are not really there. This is clearly not the sort of thing that Christ meant when He said that Abraham rejoiced to see His day, that he saw it and was glad (St. John 8:56), or what St. John meant by saying that Isaiah saw His glory and spoke of Him (12:41). St. Paul's refrain, "according to the Scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3,4), echoed in the Nicene Creed, clearly refers not to any kind of subtle afterthought, but to actual prediction and fulfilment, in the sense of Peter's Pentecost sermons: David, "being a prophet" (Acts 2:30), spoke not of himself, but foresaw and predicted the Resurrection (v.31) and Ascension (v.34) of Christ. The *Discussions* nowhere assert this sort of thing. It is the critical methodology which obstructs faithful imitation of the Apostles here:

If modern Old Testament exegesis has rarefied the nexus between the Testaments to the point where it bears only a shadowy resemblance to that massive and living connection posited by the apostles; if it has made dubious and problematical what is for the apostles certain and axiomatic, the methodological question inevitably arises: If modern methodology in Old Testament exegesis has brought men to the point where they can no longer "imitate" the apostles, may it not be that we are in the last stages of a grandiose aberration, comparable to the age-long domination of the four-fold sense in patristic and medieval exegesis?⁵⁹

The decisive text, to my mind, is I Peter 1:10-12:

It was this salvation that the prophets were looking and searching so hard for; their prophecies were about the grace which was to come to you. The Spirit of Christ which was in them foretold the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would come after them, and they tried to find out at what time and in what circumstances all this was to be expected. It was revealed to them that the news they brought . . . was for you and not for themselves (Jerusalem Bible).

If the Gospel were really "the governing principle" of the *Discussions'* theology, and not merely a stalking-horse for critical methodology, should not *Discussion Six* imitate and embrace with delight St. Peter's positively aggressive insistence on direct prophecies of Christ? After all, what could be more gloriously Christ-centered and Gospel-oriented? Instead, we find the whole issue skirted with cautious ambiguities! We are even warned "not to leap prematurely into the New Testament to find the meaning of Old Testament passages." This is because the "Old Testament deserves to be thoroughly studied on its own terms and in its own historical context first of all." But again the concern is not really for the Old Testament "on its own terms," but for certain historical-critical reconstructions of it. Thus, no attempt at all is made to defend the historicity of Genesis, in *Discussions One* and *Two*, against current critical fashions. On the contrary!

THE real "governing principle" is the dead hand of historical criticism. And although the critical acids have eaten more deeply into the *Discussions'* treatment of the Old Testament, the New is by no means exempt. Nor is this surprising. Since the Old and New Testaments form "one front," they cannot be separated into water-tight—or corrosion-proof—compartments. Hartlich and Sachs show in their authoritative monograph that the notion of "myth," once introduced into the first chapters of Genesis, could not be contained there, but soon demanded, and got, entry-rights into the rest of the Old Testament, and into the New as well.⁶⁰ And whether the term "myth" is explicitly used or not, the idea behind it is an inner necessity for historical criticism, since that approach cannot remain true to itself while allowing special status or privilege to Biblical accounts. Hence Kuenneth is right when he says that "in Bultmann we find the completion [*Zuendefuehrung*] and perfection of historical criticism."⁶¹

In the field of New Testament history the *Discussions* try to hunt with the critical hounds while running with a somewhat emancipated gospel-hare. On the whole they clearly mean to assert the factual-historical "infrastructure" of the Incarnation and Redemption. So for instance the Resurrection is described as one of the "hard core events of human history." (The Empty Grave is affirmed, but in the more non-committal *Discussions* rather than in the *Affirmations*. Perhaps this is an oversight). But on the other hand there is a persistent tendency to denigrate factual elements in the Biblical narrative. False and dangerous oppositions are set up, for instance: "central meaning of the miracle accounts" vs. "dwelling on the authenticity of isolated miraculous details;" "the need for historical factuality" vs. "the primary need for Christ;" "faith alone" vs. "verification of historical details;" "promise of a faithful God" vs. "the accuracy of ancient historians" (i.e., the Biblical writers)! And critical slaps are directed at "an absolute acceptance of each detail of the miracle, precisely as it is reported," and "public acceptance of the historicity of every detail of the life of Jesus as recorded by the evangelists" and "the historical accuracy of one element of the Gospel narratives."

Questioning mere "details" sounds very harmless. But what is a "detail?" Anything, it seems, which one wants to get rid of. So for instance *Discussion Two*, having placed the historicity of Adam and Eve on the free list, urges a de-historicized doctrinal lesson "regardless of how we interpret the details of Genesis 3." In other words, the very historical existence of Adam and Eve is dismissed here as "details!" Nor can the problem be waved away with the

magic wand of "Law and Promise." The category "Promise," as used in the *Discussions*, turns out to have no necessary connection with fact and history. *Discussion Six* says: "The Promise in the Old Testament assumes many forms," and then cites Adam, Cain, and Noah. Unfortunately, as we have seen, Adam's existence was sacrificed already in *Discussion Two*. This no doubt settles Cain's fate as well, and Noah's critical status is not encouraging. Now, how can "Promise" (or "Gospel") safeguard a single historical fact about Christ when it can obviously make do equally well with completely unhistorical, non-existent people, and mere literary devices?

NOTEWORTHY in all this is the fact that actual argumentation in the *Discussions* regularly leads to "permissive" conclusions about historical factuality, while "conservative" statements just appear, like Melchisedek, out of nowhere. They are simply asserted, without any grounding in argument. But if the *Discussions* are really meant to illustrate "how the Gospel [rather than *sola scriptura*] governs our handling of theological topics," then we have a right to expect a clear procedure to be spelt out for determining which facts are essential to the Gospel, and which not, and why. Otherwise we are forced to conclude once more that the Gospel doesn't govern at all, but is merely used as window-dressing for the historical-critical disposition of "theological topics." How for instance does the Gospel require the Resurrection to be a "hard core" event of history, when equally competent and sincere practitioners of the critical method think otherwise, yet insist that they too care only about "Law and Gospel?" Or why not this notion of "hard core event?" "Take the Exodus for example. Something happened, to be sure. But I tend to believe that much of the miraculous that is associated with the event was an embellishment of it?"⁶² More "details?"

If the important thing is the "central meaning of the miracle accounts" rather than "dwelling on the authenticity of isolated miraculous details," then why not say with the above article from *Context* that the miracles never happened at all, but that "these stories were the authors' way of emphasizing the importance of God's activity and the importance of Jesus as the Christ?" Isn't that even "Christo-centric?" And surely the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, whose official organ *Context* is, also knows all about Law and Gospel! Does the St. Louis Seminary object to church-fellowship with the Chicago school, or are these regarded as tolerable differences of opinion? Or why, apart from the Scripture-principle, is it wrong to say further with the same *Context* article: "we know darn well something was happening, maybe not to a group of people standing in a boat watching Jesus, but something was happening somewhere in the life of the early community that made it seem desirable to put in something like this, which is undoubtedly rooted in experience but which also has been embellished?"

IN short, if the Gospel allows us to take liberties with the "details," how does one know what belongs to the Gospel and what not? How can such a historically permissive Gospel show that the New Testament is more valid than, say, Israeli Supreme Court Justice Haim Cohn's fascinating thesis that the Jewish leaders, far from seeking Jesus' Crucifixion, did their best to prevent it? Cohn uses "Christian" interpreters to argue: "In short, the Gospel traditions are 'messages of faith and not historiography,' any historical material in their hands the authors used 'to add detail and graphic quality,' but, on the whole, they freely exercised their

fantasy 'in presenting, and in meaning to present, not history but theology.'" ⁶³ Is it a sufficient answer merely to substitute "Risen Lord" for "fantasy?"

It is clear that the *Discussions'* persistent ambivalence towards "mere" facts reflects neo-orthodox bias and orientation. From liberalism neo-orthodoxy has inherited the habit of regarding Scripture as one of the "products of man's religious life," none of which "is in itself infallible or a direct, unmediated result of divine activity." ⁶⁴ The same authoritative source says: "Neo-orthodoxy agrees with liberalism that the whole area of spatio-temporal fact and event is the valid object of scientific inquiry, with the result that the hypotheses of science in the area of natural and historical fact are regarded as authoritative." Hence, "to the contemporary thinker theological doctrines are statements containing symbolic rather than literal truth, propositions pointing to the religious dimensions of events rather than propositions containing factual information about events." This explains, to quote a book by Dean Hazelton, highly recommended by Jaroslav Pelikan, "the simple fact that what most biblical theologians mean by history is just what historians themselves are wont to call myth, saga, or legend—almost the very opposite of history as they understand it." ⁶⁵

How odd that the very people who talk most about the "mighty acts" of the "God who acts," then reduce acts and facts to meanings, and history to ideals! The *Discussions'* double-mindedness gravitates along this neo-orthodox incline, which leads inevitably to the full-blown schizophrenia described by L. Gilkey:

Suddenly a vast panoply of divine deeds and events recorded in Scripture are no longer regarded as having actually happened . . . all these "acts" vanish from the plane of historical reality and enter the never-never land of "religious interpretation" by the Hebrew people . . . The difference between this view of the Bible as a parable illustrative of Hebrew religious faith and the view of the Bible as a direct narrative of God's actual deeds and words is so vast that it scarcely needs comment . . . What has happened is that, as modern men perusing the Scriptures, we have rejected as invalid all the innumerable cases of God's acting and speaking; but as neo-orthodox men looking for a word from the Bible, we have induced from all these cases the theological generalization that God is he who acts and speaks. This general truth about God we then assert while denying all the particular cases on the basis of which the generalization was first made. Consequently, biblical theology is left with a set of theological abstractions, more abstract than the dogmas of scholasticism, for these are concepts with no known concreteness.⁶⁶

President Preus' *Principles* show that these contours of the contemporary theological landscape have been thoroughly grasped. The *Discussions* sleepwalk by comparison. What does it mean, for instance, that a "promise depends on a relationship of trust, not a series of rational proof" (*Discussion Five*), and that the "promise is ours by faith alone not by the verification of historical details" (*Discussion Four*)? Aren't these shoes all on the wrong feet? These formulations suggest that the orthodox, formal principle approach demands "rational proofs" and the "verification of historical details," while the *Discussions* represent "faith alone" and a "relationship of trust." But in fact the reverse is true: orthodox faith accepts the "historical details" of the text without any "rational proofs" or "verification," simply because of its "rela-

tionship of trust" to Christ and His Word, the Bible. The *Discussions* meanwhile defend historical criticism, which accepts nothing on authority, but insists on "rational proofs" and "verification" of all "historical details!" And *Discussion Five's* attempted contrast between "merely a passing agreement to keep an appointment or do an assignment" and "a word of commitment from the depths of someone's being" misfires too. For it is just the formal principle approach which accepts in trust God's full "commitment" in the Bible, and therefore trusts the details. God is not an absent-minded professor, who might with the best of intentions overlook a minor appointment. It is not only irrational but sacrilegious to pretend to trust His Word in "large matters," while suspecting the reliability of His Word in "small matters" (cf. St. Luke 16:10)!

This again illustrates the consistent pattern of the *Discussions*: "faith," that is, the material principle, which has no quarrel whatever with its own historical details, is being used as a battering ram to make way for the historical-critical approach, which, as soon as it is admitted, starts gnawing away at the "details" of the very Gospel in the name of which it gained entry! The *Discussions* ought not to pretend that the dispute is about whether faith is more than the acceptance of historical facts, when the real thrust of the critical approach is that it is less!

The "ultimate purpose" of Scripture and the "central meaning" of particular texts may not be played off against intermediate purposes and "details." The broader truth must illuminate, not eliminate, the narrower. To the extent that the "details" are sacrificed, the general truths become vacuous abstractions, quite contrary to the incarnational-sacramental mystery of the Biblical narrative. Without historical and geographical details there simply was no Incarnation. To say, for instance, that the Lake Gennesaret must be understood not as a geographical, but as a "theological place,"⁶⁷ is to embrace the very spirit of antichrist, who denies that Jesus is come "in the flesh" (I John 4:2,3)! The Good News, after all, is not about shadows but about en-flesh-ment, reality, body (John 1:14-17; Col. 2:9-17), and glories precisely in these!

John's symbolism, therefore, does not compromise history but presupposes it; for him there is no tension between the symbolic and the factual: his symbols are the real events of history, and his symbolism is inherent in these events; his symbolism not only explains the inner meaning of these historic events, but to John, the privileged witness of the incarnate Word, all this symbolism would be useless if these events had not taken place (*Jerusalem Bible*, Introduction to St. John).

That our holy Faith is the religion of the Word doesn't mean that it is a religion of words. To the life-giving Gospel's "output" of Word and Sacrament there corresponds the "input" of the Savior's teaching and action. To paraphrase Luther on Baptism: The Biblical facts are not simple history only, but they are the history comprehended in God's command and connected with God's Word. This sacred "sacramental union" between words and acts, doctrine and fact, is irrevocably fixed in the once-and-for-all-ness of God's saving act in Christ. And the eternal inviolability of this sanctuary extends to its concrete particulars, to what human reason might dismiss as "peripheral details" (Mark 14:9)! Here faith must take its stand, and with the flaming Sword of the Spirit defiantly bar the way to every abomination of desolation or desecration, under whatever methodological guise!

C. The Third Article

THE definition of the church as "communities" in the third set of *Affirmations* foreshadows the relevant *Discussions'* failure to confess explicitly 1) the distinction between the church properly speaking and the Church in the wider sense of the word, i.e., the "fellowship of outward ties and rites;" 2) the pure marks of the Church; 3) the difference between orthodox and heterodox churches; and 4) the distinction between the Two Kingdoms. These confusions appear to be in the service of a "social action" oriented ecumenicism.

The *Affirmations* do refer once to the Lord's "body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar." But nothing is said to ward off denials and compromises of the Real Presence, like *Marburg Revisited* and the *Leuenberg Concord*. Indeed, I understand that St. Louis faculty members are publicly on record as favoring Lutheran-Reformed intercommunion on such a basis. All the more alarming, therefore, to read in *Discussion Seven*: "In all of this we must trust the Spirit to lead Christians of all churches into all truth and not try to impose our particular way of wording the Gospel upon them. We affirm the Lutheran Confessions as a true exposition of God's Word; our Confessions, however, are not intended to be barriers between denominations, but bold affirmations of Christ, His Gospel and the unity of His Church."

But the Confessions themselves repudiate such a misleadingly optimistic one-sidedness:

We mean specifically to condemn only false and seductive doctrines and their stiff-necked proponents and blasphemers. These we do not by any means intend to tolerate in our lands, churches, and schools, inasmuch as such teachings are contrary to the expressed Word of God and cannot coexist with it . . . But we have no doubt at all that one can find many pious, innocent people even in those churches which have up to now admittedly not come to agreement with us . . . It is further to be hoped that when they are rightly instructed in this doctrine, they will, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, turn to the infallible truth of the divine Word and unite with us and our churches and schools (*Preface Book of Concord*).

We consider this Confession [the Augsburg Confession] a genuinely Christian symbol which all true Christians ought to accept next to the Word of God (*Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, General . . . Restatement, 4*).

This symbol distinguishes our reformed churches from the papacy and from other condemned sects and heresies (*F.C., S.D., Rule and Norm, 5*).

We reject and condemn all the sects and heresies that are rejected in the aforementioned documents (*F.C., S.D., Rule and Norm, 18*).

Note also *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, VII, 33!*

But perhaps none of this is binding in the view of the *Discussions*: "Our Commitment to the Lutheran Confessions means that we adopt their governing theological principles and engage in the theological enterprise in the same way the confessors did" (*Discussion Four*). This switch from the "what" to the "how" of the Confessions, makes confessional subscription practically meaningless. And the *Concordia Theological Monthly*, edited by the St. Louis faculty, permits itself to say editorially: "It is no part of the

doctrinal content of the Lutheran Confessions (which alone is binding) *that they are to be used today as a rule and norm for Christian faith and life*" (italics in original)!⁶⁸ Compare this with say *F.C., S.D., Rule and Norm*, 10:

Our intention was only to have a single, universally accepted, certain, and common form of doctrine which all our Evangelical churches subscribe and from which and according to which, because it is drawn from the Word of God, all other writings are to be approved and accepted, judged and regulated.

Highly relevant to the *Discussions'* stance is the part played by the Historical-Critical Method in bringing about the facile Lutheran-Reformed "agreement" in the Arnoldshain Theses, the precursor of the Leuenberg Concord:

For about 200 years German theologians had been leaders in developing the so-called "historical-critical" study of the Bible. Prior to this time the Bible had been looked upon as a divinely inspired book which contained eternal truths and no uncertainties or errors . . . German scholars began to examine the Bible in much the same way that they would examine any ancient document . . . The Lord's Supper became one of the things examined in the light of the historical-critical method . . . We should also realise that this new approach to the Bible ultimately determined the course of the discussions and the formulation of the Theses.⁶⁹

The Leuenberg Concord too documents not a real agreement between churches adhering to the Lutheran and the Reformed Confessions respectively, but a kind of esoteric professional understanding that has in essence existed among the practitioners of historical criticism all along anyway. Highly applicable to the St. Louis *Discussions* is the critique of Leuenberg from within the Bavarian Lutheran Territorial Church:

The body of doctrine of both churches is distorted because contrary to the confessional claim (*Epitome*, Rule and Norm, 1) the function of rule and norm . . . is attributed not to Scripture as a whole, but only to the message of justification. Thereby the message of justification is transformed from the chief article (*Smalcald Articles*) into a principle of selection. The expression "chief article", by contrast, implies the independent right of other articles besides it. Through this overemphasis the body of doctrine is dangerously distorted. When no longer the fullness of revelation, but an abstract doctrine is the measure of proclamation, then the church enters upon the path of the sects, which also overstress a doctrine which is correct in itself.⁷⁰

V. Summary and Conclusion

SINCE the St. Louis faculty themselves have publicly opposed their position to that of President Preus, and have described his theology as un-Lutheran and un-Biblical, they must agree that, as the *Formula of Concord* puts it, the controversy is not a mere matter of misunderstandings (these may of course be involved too) but one of basic doctrinal conflict, so "that the opinions of the erring party cannot be tolerated in the church of God, much less be excused and defended" (*S.D., Rule and Norm*, 9).

Moreover, the *Affirmations* and *Discussions* do not really attempt to refute the particulars of President Preus' *Principles* and of his Fact Finding Committee's *Report*, but try to present the whole situation in a different light or per-

spective. This perspective is shaped ostensibly by the Gospel, the material principle, but actually by historical-critical methodology. This methodology is defended as a strictly neutral tool of interpretation, and some controls are indicated, but in the most general terms, which fall far short of an adequate and revelant defense against the known perils.

Actually the *Discussions* themselves illustrate the fact that the critical methodology they champion is far from doctrinally neutral. It succeeds not only in abrogating the formal principle *sola scriptura*, completely, but even in exacting heavy tribute from the material principle, the Gospel itself, in terms of disastrous concessions in all three articles of the Creed. In this the *Discussions* represent a "swing of the pendulum" way beyond what was originally intended by the protest of Theodore Graebner and others against a certain ingrown traditionalism and rigidity. For despite some ecclesiological short circuits, which were exploited later, Graebner never wavered in principle from total commitment to both the organic and the dogmatic foundations of the Faith, which define the pure marks of the Church and thus the legitimate limits of church-fellowship.

In reaching these conclusions I have tried scrupulously to be fair, in terms of clearly and openly stated Biblical and confessional commitments. I have not maliciously twisted anyone's words. If I have misjudged this or that particular, I humbly apologize and submit to better instruction.

THE *Discussions* urge the "freedom of the Gospel." But as C.S. Lewis observed somewhere, my freedom to play chess depends on the absolute rigidity of the squares and of the moves. In the case of the Gospel this precondition of freedom is destroyed when one makes common cause with historical criticism, which rebels against the Lord and His Anointed, saying: "Let us burst their bonds asunder and cast their cords from us" (Ps. 2). This unilateral declaration of independence not from synodical statements, but from Biblical authority itself, spells not the freedom of the Gospel, but freedom from the Gospel. And the Gospel itself is tied hand and foot to the Procrustes' bed of criticism! The *Discussions* are here turning off the lights as Chesterton put it, fondly imagining that they are turning them on. But the fact that the secular tyrannies are accepted in good faith, without any apparent intention or sense of treason, does not alter the objective consequences.

"Method," observed that brilliant conservative controversialist, Bill Buckley, "is the fleshpot of those who live in metaphysical deserts." And criticism is the method of our sceptical wilderness. In a very useful book not immediately accessible to me, *In Defense of Dogmatism*, Harry Blamires distinguishes between a shallow and a deeper scepticism. He illustrates the difference with the typical crime novel: Scotland Yard detectives, representing routine, bureaucratic scepticism, question and suspect everyone, but fail to solve the mystery. Then along comes the hero, the brilliant amateur, and by questioning the conventional surface scepticism of the professionals, solves the murder. Similarly, says Blamires, the typical critical, liberal attitude to religion is a smug, superficial scepticism which is blind to its own prejudices. The dogmatic approach of faith, on the other hand, questions the easy, optimistic illusions of current fashion. Orthodox faith is not more but less gullible than self-congratulatory criticism, for it is much more realistic and therefore humble about the nature and scope of human knowledge and wisdom. It comes down to Law and Gospel again: real faith, having had its self-assured critical stuffings knocked out of it by the

Law as an awesome reality, not a paper-tiger phrase, is in no mood to tangle or tamper with the Word of the Almighty. And having received all from the Gospel, faith knows perfectly well Who is trustworthy in case of conflict: "Let God be true, and every man a liar!" (Rom. 3:4) Therefore faith looks for freedom not to a revolutionary "*Offenbarungsbewusstsein*" (being sick and tired of revelation) and its "rational liberation front," historical criticism, but to that *magna charta* of Christian liberty, the divine Scriptures. And He Who healed the paralytics, and Who here in His Word offers full release even from the final paralysis of death, certainly also releases the minds of His People from all degrading and paralyzing subservience to the "elements of this world," including the historical-critical *rigor mortis*!

And here lies the deepest tragedy of the Discussions. It is not any technical proficiency that is lacking in them, but a sense of theology. That profound Christian thinker, Etienne Gilson, a great mind as well as a generous spirit, has in his memoirs described and discussed much that is acutely relevant also to the decay of doctrinal substance in Lutheran churches. Here is a striking excerpt:

we had no doubt that, if he was a Catholic, a philosopher was thereby a theologian. That is why so many people dabbled in theology in an amateurish way without being aware of incurring any risk. A case in point was a most devout Christian, capable of holding both a chair of philosophy and a chair of mathematics, who did not hesitate to expound the most intricate theological problems. He even undertook to explain to the Church the nature of religious dogmas, as though she had not been promulgating them for centuries. His ignorance of theology was as complete as ours. Doctrinal condemnations were to be expected, but when they came, they took that small world by surprise. Those condemned simply considered themselves persecuted by backward theologians.⁷¹

Quite apart from President Preus' *Principles*, the theological faculty of St. Louis ought long ago to have recognized and faithfully warned against American Lutheranism's Gaderene descent into chaos and unbelief, as documented in purely empirical studies like L. Kersten's *The Lutheran Ethic*. Instead, the faculty, and especially its current President, Dr. Tietjen, have done their level best to promote a deceptive outward union even with those "Lutheran" bodies in which the disease has obviously reached the terminal stages. President Preus and the church he represents have every right to expect their chief Seminary to take a clear, decisive stand on the great theological issues of today. The Discussions partly evade these issues, and partly seek to justify their compromise with the historical-critical root-evil. And doxological phrases ("common chorus of adoration") are no substitute for unambiguous theological substance.

BUT the Missouri Synod has and must have the freedom to confess the Gospel according to Scripture and Confessions, and to define what this means in the face of internal and external aberrations. Article II of Synod's constitution is an instrument of confession, not a waxen nose, which allows anything that pays lip-service to Scripture and Confessions. If God's Word, "as becometh it," is not to be bound, but to "have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people," then the pseudo-freedom of the Discussions must be rejected.

If misunderstandings do exist, then let them be faced. There is no reason why, if the faculty have genuine Biblical, confessional objections to this or that particular point of the *Principles*, these could not be clearly pointed out and satisfactorily adjusted. But the issue cannot be left unresolved. When Pelagius' companion, Coelestius, gave evasive answers before a North African Council, the latter demanded that he explicitly reject particular points of false doctrine which had been attributed to him. When he refused, the Council excommunicated him for heresy. This ecclesiastical decisiveness is not a matter of "casuistry," as Dr. Tietjen seems to suggest,⁷² but belongs to the integrity of the church and of her very reason for being. What to do about someone who is personally confused or wrong about some point of Christian doctrine, can be a very complex pastoral problem. But what must be done about a public teacher who spreads such confusion and errors, perhaps even among the future clergy, is a very clean doctrinal question!

Certainly that great theologian of the Cross, Martin Luther, knew the meaning of Law and Gospel, and of Christian freedom. And like St. Paul (Gal. 1:8, 9) he did not confuse the Gospel with a soft permissiveness, but insisted on the difference between a confessing church and a discussion club. When Prof. George Major was shocked at Luther's sign, above his study-door: "Our professors must be examined regarding the Lord's Supper," the great Reformer explained:

You make yourself suspect with your silence and covering up. But if you believe as you speak before me, then speak thus also in the church, in the public lectures, in sermons and private conversations, and strengthen your brethren and help the erring back to the right path, and contradict the wilful spirits; otherwise your confession is only a masquerade and of no use. He who regards his doctrine, faith, and confession as true, right, and certain, cannot stand in one stall with others who hold false doctrine or are given to it, nor constantly pay compliments to the devil and his works. A teacher who keeps silent about the errors, and nevertheless wants to be a true teacher, is worse than a public fanatic, and with his hypocrisy does more damage than a heretic, and he is not to be trusted. He is a wolf and a fox, a hireling and a belly-server, and dares to despise and surrender doctrine, Word, faith, Sacrament, churches and schools. He either lies secretly under one blanket with the enemies, or he is a doubter and weather-vane, and wants to see how things will turn out, whether Christ or the devil will win out; or he is totally uncertain in himself, and not worthy to be called a student, much less a teacher, and doesn't want to offend anyone, neither speak His Word for Christ, nor hurt the devil and the world.⁷³

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Footnotes

- ¹ Quoted in Theodore Graebner, *The Historic Lutheran Position In Non-Fundamentals* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1939), p. 22.
- ² Quoted in J. W. Montgomery, ed., *Crisis in Lutheran Theology*, Vol. II (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), p. 56.
- ³ U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1961).
U. Cassuto, *Commentary on Genesis*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961 & 1964).
- ⁴ J. W. Montgomery, *Crisis in Lutheran Theology*, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), pp. 85-86.
- ⁵ K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (London: Tyndale, 1966), p. 112.
- ⁶ M. Niedenthal, ed., "Miracle Stories—Testimony to Faith or Credibility Gap?" *Context*, Vol. I, No. 3 (Spring/Summer, 1968), pp. 36 ff.
- ⁷ Luther College Religion Department, eds., *Theological Perspectives* (Decorah: Luther College Press, 1968), p. 49.
- ⁸ W. Kuenneth, *Die Grundlagenkrise der Theologie heute*. Essay presented to the Council of the European Evangelical Alliance, London, September, 1968, p. 11.
- ⁹ H.-J. Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* (Neukirchener Verlag, 1969, 2nd ed.), *passim*.
- ¹⁰ J. W. Montgomery, *Crisis*, I, p. 64.
- ¹¹ C. Hartlich and W. Sachs, *Der Ursprung des Mythosbegriffes in der modernen Bibelwissenschaft* (Tuebingen: Siebeck, 1952), pp. 87-89.
- ¹² Kraus, *op. cit.*, p. 249.
- ¹³ *ibid.*, p. 253.
- ¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 254.
- ¹⁵ *Korrespondenzblatt* (Pfarrerverein in Bavaria), 1969, pp. 128-21.
- ¹⁶ *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXXVI, 8, pp. 507-508.
- ¹⁷ Kraus, *op. cit.*, p. 390.
- ¹⁸ H. D. Hummel, "The Outside Limits Of Lutheran Confessionalism In Contemporary Biblical Interpretation," *The Springfielder*, XXXVI, 1 (June, 1972), p. 44.
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 41.
- ²⁰ Kraus, *op. cit.*, p. 392.
- ²¹ *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXXVI, 8, pp. 502-533.
- ²² *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XL, 4, pp. 233-246.
- ²³ *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXXVIII, 6, pp. 363-375.
- ²⁴ *Springfielder*, XXXV, 4, p. 266.
- ²⁵ *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XLII, 5, p. 280.
- ²⁶ *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXXVIII, 6, p. 370.
- ²⁷ Kraus, *op. cit.*, p. 312.
- ²⁸ Cf. quotations in C. F. W. Walther, *Die evangelisch-lutherische Kirche, die wahre sichtbare Kirche Gottes auf Erden* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1891), esp. Theses XIII ff. Also: R. D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), pp. 329 ff.
- ²⁹ Quoted in G. Gloege, *Mythologie und Luthertum* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), p. 79.
- ³⁰ St. Louis ed., IV, 1307.
- ³¹ Chemnitz, Leyser, Gerhard, *Harmoniae Quatuor Evangelistarum* (Frankfurt and Hamburg, 1652), Vol. I, pp. 1255 & 1256.
- ³² *Springfielder*, XXXV, 4, p. 270.
- ³³ Quoted in *Lutherischer Rundblick*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1970, p. 325.
- ³⁴ Th. Engelder, Ed., *Walther and The Church* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 14.
- ³⁵ *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XLIII, 4, p. 262.
- ³⁶ Graebner, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
- ³⁷ *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XLII, 8, p. 483.
- ³⁸ "The Posture of the Interpreter," p. 10, *Proceedings*, Conference of Theologians, Oakland, Calif., 1959.
- ³⁹ *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XLIII, 4, pp. 232-247.
- ⁴⁰ *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XLII, 5, p. 278.
- ⁴¹ *Religious Bodies*, 1956 ed., p. 144.
- ⁴² Schroeder, *op. cit.*, p. 242.
- ⁴³ Gloege, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
- ⁴⁴ St. Louis ed., IX, 644.
- ⁴⁵ J. H. Tietjen, *Fact Finding Or Fault Finding?*, p. 6.
- ⁴⁶ Kuenneth, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
- ⁴⁷ Quoted in Gloege, *op. cit.*, p. 183.
- ⁴⁸ Gabler, quoted in Hartlich-Sachs, *op. cit.*, p. 66.
- ⁴⁹ *Report of the Synodical President*, p. 83.
- ⁵⁰ Hartlich-Sachs, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
- ⁵¹ A. E. Wilder Smith, *The Creation of Life: A Cybernetic Approach to Evolution*. Wheaton: Harold Shaw, 1970.
G. A. Kerkut, *Implications of Evolution*. Oxford: Pergamon, 1960.
A. Ch.v. Guttenberg *Biologie als Weltanschauung*. Ratingen: A. Henn, 1967.
- ⁵² R. J. Rushdoony, *The Mythology of Science*. Nutley: Craig Press, 1967. R. T. Clark and J. D. Bales, *Why Scientists Accept Evolution*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966.
- ⁵³ Hartlich-Sachs, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
- ⁵⁴ *Alternatives Information-Action-Line*, June 15, 1972, quoted in *Christian News*, July 31, 1972, p. 3.
- ⁵⁵ W. M. Oesch, "Die Lehre von der Inspiration und ihre Anwendung auf die Urgeschichte," *Fuldaer Heft*, No. 13, 1960, p. 51.
- ⁵⁶ H. Hummel, "Critical Methodology and the Lutheran Symbols' Treatment of the Genesis Creation Accounts," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XLIII, 8, p. 545.
- ⁵⁷ *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XLII, 4, pp. 203-221.
- ⁵⁸ J. S. Setzer, "A Fresh Look at Jesus' Eschatology and Christology in Mark's Petrine Stratum," *The Lutheran Quarterly*, XXIV, 3, pp. 252-253.
- ⁵⁹ "Posture of the Interpreter," p. 11.
- ⁶⁰ Hartlich-Sachs, *op. cit.*, *passim* esp. pp. 61 ff.
- ⁶¹ Kuenneth, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
- ⁶² Niedenthal, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 38.
- ⁶³ H. Cohn, *The Trial and Death of Jesus* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), p. XV.
- ⁶⁴ M. Halverson and A. Cohen, *A Handbook of Christian Theology* (London: Collins, 1958), p. 261.
- ⁶⁵ R. Hazelton, *New Accents in Contemporary Theology* (New York: Harper, 1960), p. 66.
- ⁶⁶ L. B. Gilkey, "Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXXIII, 3, pp. 145-152.
- ⁶⁷ cited in Kuenneth, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- ⁶⁸ *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XLII, 5, p. 259.
- ⁶⁹ E. M. Skibbe, *Protestant Agreement on the Lord's Supper* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1968), pp. 77-79; cited T. N. Teigen, "A Proper Basis for a Discussion of the Lord's Supper," *The Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, IX, 4, pp. 42-43.
- ⁷⁰ *Stellungnahme des Theologischen Ausschusses der Gesellschaft fuer Innere und Aeußere Mission im Sinne der lutherischen Kirche zur Leuenberger Konkordie*, 1972, p. 6.
- ⁷¹ E. Gilson, *The Philosopher and Theology* (New York: Random, 1962), p. 64.
- ⁷² Tietjen, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- ⁷³ cited in C.F.W. Walther, *Der Concordienformel Kern und Stern* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1906), pp. 40-41.

Gospel and Bible

WHAT confessional Lutheranism affirms is an indissoluble unity of Gospel and Bible, not one versus the other. It is just as incorrect and one-sided to say "Sola Scriptura is Gospel alone" as it is to try to believe in the Bible in exactly the same way as one believes in the Gospel or in Christ. To assert the former is something like saying, "A bottle of milk is milk alone." Our major interest, indeed, is in the contents, but the contents are available only in a container that does not leak.

If the issue were only that of priority of Bible or Gospel, one might be excused for dismissing the whole issue as mere politics, or as a chicken-or-egg debate of theologians who have nothing better to do. That, as such, is a non-issue. We affirm that, just as the Bible is mute without the Gospel, so the Gospel soon becomes adulterated and mute without the Bible. God, the Holy Spirit, is prior to both. Both are true and authoritative only as aspects of God's revelation.

Likewise, if the issue were only a matter of reminding us that faith is more than mere intellectual assent to propositions or doctrines, that the Holy Spirit is indispensable in leading us from mere knowledge *about* God to a saving, existential knowledge *of Him*, or that a correct doctrine of Scripture does not in and of itself guarantee a correct understanding of the Gospel, we would be only too grateful, for we can never have too many such reminders.

Indeed, "biblicism" is a danger only where the Bible is not demoted in any way, and the "Melanchthonian blight" (Intellectualism) only where pure doctrine is held in highest regard! But (at best) why fight the enemy on a field he has long since largely vacated? Can anyone look about and deny that Irrationalism (parading as "faith") and abysmal doctrinal and Biblical illiteracy and indifference are infinitely greater enemies today?

NEITHER is the issue inerrancy as such, although that necessarily follows if we affirm that God is really the Author of Scripture, alongside its human authors. Maybe that issue is only "philosophical," as some say, but, if so, only in the sense that everything is ultimately "philosophical," so that it is simply a matter of *which* philosophy or confession is yours. (Especially Kant in these matters often appears to be granted a definitive authority which is not conceded to the Bible—and Kierkegaard runs a close second!) Let no one kid you into thinking that inerrancy is really any less defensible today than ever (unless it is just a matter of joining the "crowd"). Its "logical" problems are no greater than the barest belief in the mere existence of God. As it always has been, it remains a matter of presuppositions, of whether or not that is part of the faith with which you approach the canon.

The real issue, rather, has to do with the *nature of revelation*. Is revelation basically a matter of personal "encounter" with God, or is it also intrinsically propositional and inscripturated? Has God only revealed Himself, or has He also revealed *facts*, historical and doctrinal, about Himself, which I may know with certainty from the Bible? Is the "experience" of faith primary and all expressions of it secondary, or does "faith" necessarily include rational content? Is there only that one "doctrine" (experience) of the Gospel, or does the totality of the Gospel consist of various doctrinal articles? Must we believe *that* as well as believe *in*? What *IS* the "Gospel" and how do I know (epistemology)? Is God's revela-

tion objectively present and available in the Bible independent of my subjective reception of it, or does my faith help determine the content of revelation? One doesn't have to *think* too hard to realize that much, very much, depends upon how we answer such questions.

IF we answer them as virtually all Christendom did until a couple of centuries ago, we will also realize the artificiality and impossibility of trying to affirm the "infallibility" of the Bible's doctrinal content without also confessing the "inerrancy" of the rest. In the Bible itself the history virtually is the doctrine, and vice versa. The two are so inextricably intertwined that only some alien dogma or philosophy would normally even tempt one to try to separate them. The Bible cares for a *mere*, naked "historicity" of "facticity" apart from saving faith as little as it does for any "faith" apart from them. Even to attempt these distinctions is to remove the final test and court of appeal for religious truth questions from objective Biblical text and canon to the subjective judgments of the reader—and this is precisely the issue.

Merely proving facticity or historicity does not also prove their revelatory validity, of course, but it does not follow that hence factuality is in any way secondary or dispensable. Luther and the Reformation renounced any "magisterial" use of reason in trying to cooperate with revelation and redemption, but they emphatically did not, as most modern theology does, also, reject (or even minimize) its "ministerial" use in articulating *what* "Gospel" and "faith" are—and are *not*. The "whole man" assents with his mind as much as with his heart and will. He normally comes to the faith and grows in the faith in one respect as much as the other.

The Bible forbids any kind of metaphysical dichotomy of faith or Gospel and other knowledge. Truth is one because God is one. If faith is not true also in the ordinary world of space and time, it is not true at all. The Gospel is just as objectively true as the facts of science, but knowable only via supernatural revelation.

It is nonsense to claim, as some do, that "faith" is strengthened when historical-critical methods or other naturalistic assumptions have made it impossible to be sure any longer just what the Bible teaches or the "Gospel" is. Faith is not destroyed by having an objective, reliable basis, but precisely by *not* having one. "Faith" in Biblical and confessional usage is not mysticism. If the "hand that receives" has nothing to receive but itself or that which it controls, we are either uncertain what faith we are justified by, or that "faith" is turned into our own *work* (as the phrase is so often misunderstood). Hence, when "Gospel" is in any way loosened from its objective basis in the Bible, we can speak of a "Pelagianism" or at least "semi-Pelagianism" of *revelation*—if not also of redemption, which it readily becomes as well. Man's search for God or at least for adequate words to describe his feelings tends to replace God's definitive revelation of Word and words.

WE must, however, be careful affirming a "domino theory," of which much sport is made in some quarters. It is quite demonstrable that denial of full, objective Biblical authority does not necessarily and inevitably lead to shipwreck of faith. To say that could even leave the wrong im-

pression that faith in the Bible as such is necessary for salvation in the same sense as faith in the vicarious atonement. But who besides God can look in anyone's heart and test the genuineness of any profession of faith? We have never questioned the basic Christianity of those who merely disagreed with us on some doctrines. Is that all we are supposed to dare to worry about? Declare and practice fellowship with anyone who professes to believe? Indeed, just like both letter and spirit of the Book of Concord! (Our Confessions are very ecumenical, but in a fundamentally different way than is common today!) If the church is not at all sure what it believes and teaches, confuses Law and Gospel and its mission of redemption with political "liberation" and "humanization," as is so common today, can this not but be confusing and detrimental to the faithful? That much one can just about demonstrate statistically! Thus, we will not dismiss the "domino theory" out of hand either.

The "knowledge" that both Gospel and Bible are true comes only from the one Holy Spirit. The knowledge of what both are, and especially what "Gospel" means in all its doctrinal aspects comes from and is tested only by the Spirit's gift, the Bible. The Holy Spirit is no spiritualist! One "tests the spirits" only from an objectively inspired Scripture in which the subjectivity of the interpreter plays no role. The true Spirit is objectively present in the Scriptures in a way comparable to His "real presence" in the Lord's Supper (although, of course, in both cases in a relation to us of "Law" or judgment until He moves us to accept the promise or Gospel offered there).

Both Bible and classical theology use "knowledge" in both senses, knowledge of God and knowledge about Him. Divorce or confusion of the two is of the very essence of "liberalism." Any good theological handbook will tell you that "liberalism" refers to a *method* of "doing theology" as much as to its actual contents. The very words, "liberal," "conservative," etc., lose all precise meaning (as we know only too well) if there is no firm, external point of reference.

AS to *method*, the roads divide according to whether in principle the content of theology is determined solely from an objectively inspired Scripture, or whether the mind and experience of the believer is also allowed some role to determine what is "Word of God for me." Of course, it is not true "for me," at least not as saving Gospel, until I accept it, but the point is precisely that that existential, personal meaning is only *passively* received and may in no way be allowed to determine what is objectively true by itself (*extra nos*). Since the minds and experiences of no two people are alike, "Gospel" inevitably also tends to vary with the individual if his subjectivities are allowed any determining role.

Many individuals or groups which are *methodologically liberal* may nevertheless be quite *conservative* in the *content* of their theologies because a conservative *tradition* has been their "experience." They may well then claim not to be "liberal" in any sense. Should we really worry about such theoretical abstractions as "method" as long as the content is sound? As concerns the minimums of saving faith, perhaps not, but, again, only God can judge that anyway! However when it comes to doctrine, the method to a large extent is the theology. It certainly is scarcely "Lutheran" to put such accent on experience and tradition!

Comparison with science may be instructive. As with mere faith, perhaps, I may use and benefit from a vast amount of scientific knowledge without knowing how it was obtained. However, comparable to doctrine, if I am to do scien-

tific research and defend its conclusions, I must also understand the scientific *method*. A minute miscalculation at rocket launching means big trouble later on. Running fast on the wrong road only gets us further from our goal. Sincerity is not enough; one may also be sincerely wrong.

Many other individuals and groups, however, will not have such conservative backgrounds and experiences. If the Bible is viewed as only a "record" of ancient, groping attempts to articulate religious experiences, the interaction of modern experience with it will readily trigger a "gospel" that is *liberal in content* as well as in method. As "revelation in nature" was of the essence of paganism, and "revelation in Scripture and history" the hallmark of orthodoxy "revelation in the individual heart" is the focus of virtually all brands of modern theology (and often about all they have in common.)

AND if experience is admitted to the bar to judge truth, who can possibly presume to judge that experience un genuine, no matter what one's personal feelings are? If "faith" means merely a "deeper questioning" about the transcendent ("Gospel"), it becomes virtually impossible to "lose" that faith, and one is always "right," no matter what position he embraces. That is, *permissiveness* is inherent in the liberal *method*, as a certain pluralism of contents nearly inevitably follows. Doctrinal discipline is inherently abhorrent to it. By their fruits shall ye know them!

As the past decade has taught us again, in case we had tried to forget, legitimization of personal experience as a source and test of religious truth will surely mean some degree of identification of "gospel" with the ideals of the current culture, at least of the leftist-liberal-intellectual subculture. Typically, there will be much more certainty about politics than about the theology. The *real Gospel* will often be heard only occasionally while they catch their breath between chasing fads. By their fads shall ye know them! Also in recent years, the upsurge of such faddism in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has been one of the surest symptoms of confessional erosion.

We observe a frequent tendency to sweep under the rug as "Reformed" or at least "not Lutheran" whatever someone prefers not to talk about. Yet if there is anything of doubtful Lutheran paternity, it is that entire stance toward the interpretation of the Old Testament and the church's mission commonly called "prophetic," a stance, which, at least in its usual form, simply collapses if Scripture remains its own interpreter. (One also notes how quickly the professed fear of being "Reformed" evaporates in ecumenical contexts!)

ALL of this has still more intimate bearing on the LC-MS "Gospel-Bible" debate. The most vocal champions of the priority of "Gospel" (or, more precisely, "Law-Gospel") tend to be disciples of Werner Elert. In *content* that theology is in the main undeniably quite Lutheran. In *method*, however, it plainly has more in common with Schleiermacher ("Mr. Liberal"), Bultmann and the "new hermeneutic" than with Luther and the Confessors. It represents a sort of "neo-Lutheran" counterpart of neo-orthodoxy and modern existentialism rather than historic Lutheran confessionalism. The more recent repudiation of neo-orthodoxy in most modern theology (where the epithet "Barthian" tends to be spat out in the same breath as "biblicist," "fundamentalist," etc.) would seem not to augur too well for neo-Lutheranism either!

A surface indication of Elertianism's liberal affinities is its championship of the typical liberal attempt (with again often

little else in common) to get Luther in its corner as an alleged precursor of modern accents on the role of subjective experience ("Gospel") in the interpretation of Scripture. This line must be exposed for what it is, a rather desperate grasping at the straws of a few unguarded remarks of the sort that abound in Luther. By that method Luther can be made out to be almost anything—as, in fact, he has been, not excluding the alleged father of historical-critical methods. It conveniently forgets Luther's many explicit statements in the other direction, as well as his failure to ever develop those passing remarks in any systematic way or to urge his co-workers and successors to do so—as they emphatically did not.

"*Was Christum treibt*" clearly accents grace in contrast to works, not in contrast to canon. Christ and Gospel are the indispensable center of the entire canon, never any real "canon within the canon." Liberal heirs of Calvin have not failed to attempt to refurbish him similarly, with even less success. In terms of Reformation antecedents, the liberal accent on experience or "Gospel" over objectively inspired Scripture would have to be labelled "Zwinglian," if not "enthusiast" or "schwaermerisch."

ELERTIANISM also reveals its liberal *method* in its inability or unwillingness to disassociate itself definitively even from those versions of "Gospel" with which it has little in common. One could fervently wish that the lines of debate cut more neatly. At least then one would know with whom he was speaking. The danger of inadvertent generalization and misrepresentation would be vastly diminished, nor could any easily argue that, because a given charge does not apply to them, it is nothing to worry about at all. Perhaps it is at the heart of our tragedy that the Elertians, who mostly even remained immune to the activist fanaticism of recent years and the shallow, moralistic "theology" usually accompanying it, do not proceed constructively with those with whom, at least in content, they have so much in common.

Instead, they make common cause with those with whom they often have little or nothing in common save a common enemy—orthodoxy with its foundation on an objectively inspired Scripture (not to be confused with the traditional orthodox systems, which no one feels compelled to defend as such anyway). They become as vocal as any in decrying "scholasticism," etc., as something hopelessly benighted and antiquated. They would have to be deaf, dumb, and blind to be unaware of their many allies of convenience who have little or no regard for "Law-Gospel." Thus, wittingly or unwittingly, they allow themselves to be used by many who are only too happy to have the more conservative run interference for them. Pressures for "discipline" certainly do not come from those allies either, so that, in effect, an ideal of "freedom" that is far more indebted to the Enlightenment than to the Reformation becomes normative (if the two have not already become thoroughly confused, as in many liberal quarters).

If and when the common enemy is removed, the coalition will promptly crumble also. Then we too can fly off in all directions together with much of the rest of mainstream, institutional Christianity today. Outside of LC-MS the Elertians cannot but be aware that one would commonly need Digenes' lantern to find some who even know what "Law-Gospel" is all about, and that those who do are likely to scoff at "those who have taken the BIG step from Pieper to Elert." If such pluralism is tolerated amongst those with whom one has official fellowship, it can scarcely be proscribed in one's own midst. But never mind, it must all be evidence of the richness of the "spirit's" gifts! It must all be "Gospel," "Christo-

centric," "confessional"—just ask them! In reality, however, all those terms will often mean only "pious subjectivity" and hence "anything goes." Anything? Well, possibly not quite anything, but as anyone who has been around knows full well, one really has to scrape the bottom of the barrel before he stumbles upon exceptions! The only heresy will be the heresy that there is such a thing as heresy, and that heresy—orthodoxy!—will scarcely be tolerated at all.

THIS entire syndrome of "Gospel first" or rejection of objective, verbal inspiration is so fantastically similar to the programs by which other denominations have been delivered into the great Protestant blaaa (recently including much of Catholicism too), that one wonders how it can even be suggested that it might go differently for us. Under these circumstances simply to holler "Gospel, Gospel, Gospel" is much like whistling in the dark, or comparable to those whom Jeremiah denounced for chanting "Temple, Temple, Temple." And since "supernaturalism" tends to be a bad word also in these circles, they can scarcely have in mind some special miraculous preservation of Lutheran confessionalism!

Indeed, one may ask whether a misguided, premature ecumenism is not our *real* problem—although it is usually hard to distinguish cause and effect. The answer probably varies with the individual, but the net result is about the same. Is it that some, incredibly, are still so sheltered that they are really unaware of the typical ecumenical babel? Have some been so overwhelmed by the desire to "get with it," to "become like the nations," that they mistake the fog for the sunshine? Has their "Gospel" already become so relativized and spiritualized that a least-common-denominator basis of unity is easy to find? Have some simply given up, so that misery loves company? In any event, we might do well to recall that much of the "Melancthonian blight" which the Confessors themselves recognized was precisely Philip's "ecumenism at any price." Isn't it strange how selective many have become about their blights? Under the prevailing rules of the ecumenical game, calls in our midst for full steam ahead can scarcely but be heard as, not only minor adjustments, but as massive repudiations of the confessional principle itself.

We affirm that it is not intrinsically "separatistic" or "sectarian" to insist upon a real meeting of minds as a prerequisite for external union and until then to champion an institutional embodiment of Lutheran orthodoxy. Nor is it "negativistic" to specify, together with the Scriptures and the historic confessions, what we reject also on the *current* scene as well as what we affirm. It may well be that some traditional formulations should be recast and some old exegetical and isagogical conclusions altered in modern light. Within the context of a common presupposition of objective Biblical authority and the maintenance of "public doctrine" until the church at large is sure of its own mind concerning new proposals, we can all profit from "dialogue" and even debate. All such proposals, however, whatever their merits, look entirely different if we go over the hill into an entirely different ball game which is liberal in method, if not also in result. If everyone simply toots his own horn, the autonomy of subjective religious experience ("Gospel") has plainly already replaced confessionalism and the objective authority of the Bible.

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May The Lutheran Theologian Legitimately Use The Historical-Critical Method?

"THE Lutheran theologian may legitimately use historical critical methodology"? This is the thesis to which President John Tietjen asked me to answer in the negative in a debate before the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. What I now offer in this study is, except for a very few additions and corrections, what I delivered before that Board.

I do not know why our President used the term "methodology" which means the study of method as he formulated the thesis. To my knowledge there has been little interest in the study of the method of historical criticism as it applies to the Word of God, Sacred Scripture. And that is not what we are discussing in our church today, just as we are not discussing the legitimate use of certain aspects of the so-called *Historical-Critical Method*. No one has ever questioned that those aspects of historical and grammatical study and analysis common to the older historic Lutheran approach to Scripture employed in our Synod and common also to the Historical-Critical Method may be legitimately used.¹

Since Dr. Tietjen in rejecting an executive order of the President of the Missouri Synod concerning Dr. Arlis Ehlen's teaching at Concordia Seminary said the following, "It is not possible for Dr. Ehlen [or 'for any other faculty member'] to teach any of his assigned courses at a seminary level of instruction, thus taking the text of Holy Scriptures with utter seriousness, without using historical-critical methodology," I take the thesis I have been asked to discuss to mean that the Historical-Critical Method ought and must be used at Concordia Seminary by all who teach courses touching Biblical interpretation.

FOR the above reasons I am addressing myself in the present debate to the (consistent) use of the *Historical-Critical Method* in the Missouri Synod. This assumes that there is a somewhat definite, known and accepted method (or methodology) of historical research being employed today and that we can agree on what it is and a definition of it. If there is no such method, that is to say, if the so-called method is merely likened to a box of tools or to an indefinite or indiscriminate series of techniques and/or procedures or to mere indiscriminate and undefined research, then we are wasting our time discussing or debating the method; then we could neither defend nor condemn the *method*. However, when scholars the world over, and also in the Missouri Synod, speak of the Historical-Critical Method and often either defend or attack it, they are definitely not speaking merely of a box of tools, of mere techniques, or of undefined non-methodological research (if indeed there is such a thing!)

All right, then. What is the Historical-Critical Method? Who defines it? Who says with sufficient authority what are the dogmas and assumptions underlying and what are the specific goals peculiar to it? Since I have never found an adequate (complete) definition of the method by practitioners of it in Missouri Synod circles, I believe we can best learn what the method is by observing how it is used, not by "sectarian" Missourian practitioners who speak of "Lutheran" presuppositions which they add to the method at their discretion, but in general everywhere by the known and accepted developers and practitioners of the method from Sem-

ler to Gunkel to Bultmann, Dodd, Kaesemann and others, and from such observations construct a description of the method.

But first let me make an historical observation. The Historical-Critical Method is a comparatively new method of approaching Scripture, originating at the time of the Enlightenment and Rationalism in Europe. Luther was not a forerunner of the method, as Robert Smith implies,² certainly not Jesus Himself, as Roy Harrisville implies.³ Hans Conzelmann, Ernst Kaesemann, Bultmann, as well as those who have written and traced the history of the method⁴ all date the origin of the method to the period of the Enlightenment when scholars had generally abandoned the inspiration of the Bible, rejected the doctrine that Scripture presented divinely revealed doctrine and were convinced that historical criticism could be applied to the Scriptures with the same force and consistency as to any other writings. The method as it is now generally used could not have arisen before that time in history, at least within Christian circles. And it is the method as it is generally used today that I am going to be talking about.

A METHOD is a way of doing something (*meta hodos*), a way of solving problems or answering questions.⁵ Every method, whether it be the scientific method used in physics, the Cartesian method in philosophy of analytic geometry, banking methods, etc. has two necessary elements.

1. Axioms, assumptions, dogmas, presuppositions which underlie the method. These may be either a) *a priori* such as the principles of empiricism and induction which underlie modern scientific method, arithmetic which underlies modern banking, or b) *a posteriori* such as established laws, e.g., $f=ma$, or the speed of light for the modern scientist.

2. Aims and goals such as knowledge in the theoretical sciences or action in practical sciences (dentistry, banking). A method, if it is to claim any allegiance must have such goals; a method is always teleological, purposeful.

These two elements, presuppositions and goals, are related in every method. In this sense the nature (*Wesen*) of the subject of a method (in science, theology, education, home economics etc.) will determine the method. For instance, if a philosopher works out a method for dealing with the subject of metaphysics (what is ultimate reality?), the nature of the subject (existent trans-empirical reality) he seeks to understand or identify will determine his method in respect to both presuppositions and goals. And a denial of the existence or meaning of the nature of the subject, as in the case of modern Logical Positivism, will render the method itself impossible or absurd. Similarly, if a Christian theologian wishes to employ a method to understand the meaning, or cognitive content, of divine revelation as presented in Holy Scripture, the nature of the subject will determine his method in respect to both presuppositions and goals. And again a denial of the fact of cognitive divine revelation or of an inscripturated revelation will make his method impossible and absurd.

A METHOD, furthermore, if it is to claim allegiance must come to some results, practical or theoretical. Thus it is "neutral" only in the sense that it is unbiased by the results it produces in accordance with its goals. And the results must be the result of the method, not of the bias or predilection of him who uses it. If a method yields no results or if its results do not correspond to its goals and aims, it cannot and ought not win approval.

A method can be assessed by the consistency with which it can be used; a method must be used consistently according to its principles and goals. For instance, if a physicist three times in a single experiment suspended the principle of $f=ma$, he would be unfaithful to his own scientific method and his results would not be accepted by his peers.

Now what are the assumptions and presuppositions (the pre-understanding concerning Scripture, history the world etc.) of the Historical-Critical Method as it deals with the Holy Scriptures? What are the goals of this method? What are some of its accepted conclusions? How consistently is it being employed? I believe we must be satisfied with the answers to all four of these questions before we can accept the method and use it. And I believe we cannot as Lutheran Christians accept the answers to any one of them.

1. The Assumptions, the Presuppositions of the Method

THE assumptions underlying the method are obviously critical and historical. Critical, in that the practitioner uses his critical faculties (synthesis, analysis, distinction) as he searches the Scriptures and attempts to set forth their meaning. This criticism is carried out "from the stand point of so-called secular science."⁶ This means that the critic does not deal with Scripture as a divine revelation but as human documents in which the critic may expect to find various and differing and even contradictory theologies, errors and other contradictions; and part of his task will be to explain all these. For the same principles of criticism will be applied to Scripture as to any other human book.

The assumptions underlying the method are *historical* in that the practitioner of the method assumes that Scripture and all its parts grew out of definite and concrete historical situations and settings, and to understand the texts of Scripture is ordinarily dependent upon knowing as much as possible of the historical situations and settings out of which the texts of Scripture developed. *Historical* criticism, then, is *essential* for *understanding* the *intended* sense of Scripture. For the most part practitioners of the method view in principle (and certainly in practice) history much as they view nature: that is, they do not attempt to explain any historical event or phenomenon by introducing any divine act or intervention into the historical causal nexus. Or to put it differently, the practitioner of the method would usually deny in principle that historical criticism can cope with an objective divine revelation or miracle. As applied to Holy Scripture this presupposition concerning the nature of history places historical research (or historiography) above the doctrine of Scripture (since all Scripture and all doctrine of Scripture is historically conditioned) and therefore also above the assertions of Scripture itself. In principle any assertion in Scripture may upon historical investigation be proved to be false or not authoritative in its original sense or intention (e.g., Paul's prohibition upon women preaching in the church; Matthew's understanding of Ps. 110 as Messianic; or the Virgin Birth as a fact and miracle). Since, according to this theory, Scripture originated and developed in history and all history is contingent, Biblical doctrine can

only be relative. This is an a priori. Listen to C.H. Dodd, a conservative practitioner of the method, on the subject of the "Time-Relativity of Prophecy:"⁷

This inseparable interweaving of the eternal and the temporary in an historical revelation has important corollaries in the philosophy of religion, which we must now here consider.

All this means further that we must always allow for limitation and error in the prophets. It should hardly be necessary to state so obvious a proposition, but the doctrine of inspiration has been so confused by the demand for inerrancy that it is necessary. No one not blinded by a superstitious bibliolatry could possibly accept for truth, as they stand, many elements in Old Testament prophecy . . . It is unnecessary to multiply examples. Any theory of the inspiration of the Bible which suggests that we should recognize such utterances as authoritative for us stands self-condemned. They are relative to their age. But I think we should say more. They are false and they are wrong.

Listen also to a conservative Lutheran, Regin Prenter,⁸ who opts for the Historical-Critical Method while adhering to the basic Lutheran doctrine, the basic Christian kerygma.

As concerns the resurrection there is therefore an unavoidable conflict between religious faith and historical criticism . . .

Naturally the historical-critical treatment of the evangelical tradition is never able to establish anything but the purely human reality of the historical existence of Jesus . . .

Nevertheless, that it is the Creator himself who is present in Jesus' humanity has always been an impossible idea to historical criticism. Therefore, historical criticism necessarily collides with everything in the tradition concerning Jesus which ascribes to him such divine majesty. We have already noted this collision between science and faith in the case of his resurrection and his birth. The same conflict also prevails in relation to the tradition concerning his earthly life and work.

No wonder Prenter earlier in his dogmatics says,⁹

The advent of modern natural science and the historical research *showed* [my emphasis] that the Bible is not inerrant in the sense of the doctrine of verbal inspiration. The historico-critical method and later the history of religions methods of research investigated even the biblical writings and *showed* [my emphasis] that they originated in the same manner as other source documents of religion.

WHETHER Prenter is right that these are conclusions and not assumptions of the method is certainly debatable, but the fact remains that today the method *assumes* that the Bible is neither verbally inspired nor inerrant, and that due to an assumption regarding history. The assumptions of the Historical-Critical Method and the assumptions of historic Lutheranism concerning the Bible¹⁰ are simply not compatible.

A curious position has been recently maintained by certain Missouri Synod theologians that the Historical-Critical Method has no presuppositions and is therefore a neutral method. We would address one question to the theologian affirming such a startling position. Does the Historical-Critical Method, as practiced generally among exegetes or as used in Missouri Synod circles, have no assumptions or presuppositions concerning the divine origin of Scripture, i.e., concerning the

fact that the Holy Spirit is the author of Scripture and Scripture is therefore divine revelation? Surely the ordinary scholar using the method will answer quickly and with assurance: Yes, the Historical-Critical Method *assumes* that the books of the Bible came into being like all other literature, historically conditioned in every respect; and therefore behind the method is the assumption that the Spirit of God is not the author of Scripture as such and that Scripture is not divine revelation.

How will the Missourian who vaunts the method answer this same question? He can, I believe, only vacillate, protesting that he personally believes in the "inspiration" of Scripture and that Scripture is revelation—we pass over the question whether there is already equivocation on the meaning of "inspiration" and "revelation"—but that this is not necessarily (but may be) a presupposition of the Historical-Critical Method. But what then if the Missouri exegete, holding to all the "Lutheran" principles of exegesis, attempts to use the Historical-Critical Method always with the presupposition of Scripture's inspiredness? Will he actually be using the method under such a condition? I would say not. Certainly something as fundamental, as constitutive for a method of reading and examining a set of writings as the divine origin of those writings which are being studied according to the method *must* either be a presupposition of the method or not. And such a presupposition is *bound* to influence and determine the conclusions to which the method comes in case after case after case. A presuppositionless methodology is an impossibility and an absurdity. And this is particularly clear in regard to the Historical-Critical Method *vis à vis* the divine origin of Scripture as God's revelation.

2. The Goals and Aims of the Method

THE explicit goals of the method are both literary and historical. *Literary* in that the intended meaning of a text or pericope from Scripture is sought. This meaning is determined not only from the analysis of the text itself, but also from the dating of the text and isolating its genre (form).

The goals and aims of the method are *historical* in that the history and background of the text are sought (form criticism, tradition criticism). The attempt is made to trace the content of the text and its form through every step of its history until it finds its way into the Scriptures (e.g., an alleged word or action of Jesus; a legend, story, event in the Pentateuch). The purpose is A) to assess the historicity and truthfulness of what the text says and B) to get at the historical word or event behind the text. The word or event behind the text takes precedence over the text itself. For instance, Joachim Jeremias¹¹ through the use of historical critical methodology concludes that the original intention of Jesus as He told the parable of the laborers in the vineyard is different from that of the canonical text (Matt. 20:1-16); and his reconstruction of Jesus' intention is to be preferred. Heinrich Kahlefeld comes to the same conclusion as he applies the method to the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:9-14).¹² Thus the intended meaning of the canonical text is only a means often to get to the historical fact or word behind the text, and the authority of the canonical text is relativized: not the text, but the history behind the text becomes authoritative for doctrine.¹³

I believe it is safe to say that whereas for Luther and the Reformers exegesis was essentially a philological discipline, for the historical critics exegesis is a historical discipline. For Luther and our Confessions Biblical and extra-Biblical historical investigation is undertaken to help determine the meaning of the canonical text, the prophetic and apostolic Word as such; for the historical critic an investigation of the meaning of the Biblical text is undertaken to help determine

the history which may or may not lie behind the text, and "history" in turn may be used to authenticate, verify or falsify the text.¹⁴

3. Results and Conclusions of the Method

THERE is no need to rehearse all the "assured results" of the so-called Historical-Critical Method. Every miracle of Jesus has been denied as a direct result of the use of the method by some scholars.¹⁵ And a great majority of the sayings attributed to Jesus have been denied as to their historicity (Bultmann). On the other hand, other scholars using the method have affirmed the historicity of most of the miracles and words attributed to Jesus in the New Testament.¹⁶ One might be tempted to say there is some basic inner inconsistency or deficiency in a method which leads to such contradictory conclusions. But I have heard few practitioners of the method say this. Or one might say that certain practitioners of the method bring their own presuppositions which are foreign to the method with them as they use it; and thus they misuse the method. But again I have heard few practitioners of the method say this in specific cases of other scholars who use the method.

But let us now speak only of those "assured results" which seem to be held by both radical and conservative practitioners of the method, results in isagogics and in exegesis, e.g., the J-E-D-P hypothesis, the late dating and unhistoric character of Daniel, Jonah and other Old Testament prophetic books, the denial of the unity of Isaiah or Jeremiah, or the hypothesis that there were three or four definite stages (strata) in the development of the Gospels as we have them. Are such "assured results" which are only hypothetical merely "neutral?" Are they useful? Do they affect the message of Scripture, the doctrine?

Like any method (e.g., geometry, scientific method) the Historical-Critical Method as it deals with the Scriptures *builds* on its own conclusions. Conclusions, like those just mentioned, become assumptions for further use of the method (as in geometry), and from that point on are usually not questioned, or rarely so. For instance, in the New Testament studies two conclusions of the method as it has dealt with the so-called synoptic problem (the apparent differences between the synoptic gospels) have now become presuppositions, norms for further understanding and interpretation of the Gospels.

1) The Gospels are not strict biography or history. Ergo we must treat these documents as not particularly interested in history and not necessarily historically reliable and correct.

2) The theology of the Gospels is the result of the pious imagination of the early Church. On the basis of these two conclusions which become hypotheses further conclusions are drawn: e.g., that Jesus may not have been tempted in the wilderness as Matthew and Luke say, that the raising of Lazarus did not take place, that the details connected with the baptism of Jesus may be only legendary, that Jesus did not institute the Lord's Supper.

All these conclusions have been suggested by Lutheran exegetes in this country. Now as far as I can see there is no basis whatsoever for either of these two conclusion-assumptions, as I shall call them. Both are based on the presumption that the theology of the Gospels is the result of different traditions which contradict each other and are irreconcilable. The assertion in the New Testament that the Spirit of Truth would lead the apostles into a united and true witness (unity of the New Testament) is rejected. The theology of the New Testament in terms of its origins is explained in completely humanistic, positivistic terms. In-

spiration or revelation is never introduced as an explanation for any of the theology (phenomena) of Scripture.

THIS is the position not only of radical theologians like John Charlot, who on the basis of historical critical methodology denies the analogy of Scripture, the unity of the New Testament and even contends that there was not one Gospel in the New Testament, but many hotly contested gospels.¹⁷ It is the position also of conservatives like Pannenberg. Pannenberg rejects a rigid, closed, secularistic view of universal correspondence within history as well as any rigid system of analogy as the criterion for understanding all history, views which would deny God's providence and miracles.¹⁸ And yet he contends that the Historical-Critical Method has rendered impossible the position that all theology must be based upon Scripture alone as God's revelation of saving events and their meaning.¹⁹ The upshot is the same conclusion as Charlot's: "Thus, the assertion of a doctrinal unity of the biblical witnesses has been made impossible by the work of critical historical research."²⁰

The historical critical conclusion-assumptions which I mentioned above, hypothetical in principle as well as contrary to the assertions of Scripture and to its unity, become in practice normative for understanding texts and essential to the historical critical interpretation of them. Let me illustrate. If one identifies parts of the story of the Exodus with a P document (written late), one may consistently conclude that what purports to be a miraculous occurrence involving God's intervention at several points in a most dramatic way did not actually occur as the story tells it. One might even conclude that the author (P source) did not intend to be telling a miracle story at all and his readers would have understood his intention. Thus, the hypothetical identification of authorship and dating of a pericope becomes normative for meaning and historicity of what is recounted in the text. This is a circular procedure; for it is only the way in which the story is told in the pericope which could determine the hypothetical source and date assigned the pericope. That is: we date and assign, according to this method, authorship to a pericope *after* we analyze its content and decide its genre (form), and we interpret the content and decide the genre *after* we have determined its date and source of authorship.

4. The Consistency of the Method

THE Historical-Critical Method, like any other, can be consistently used only by those who are committed to its presuppositions and its goals. Prenter has made this point clear in his dogmatics. But because he wishes at all costs to retain the fundamental kerygma of the New Testament, he can only use the method at times (inconsistently) when its conclusions do not affect the kerygma, the faith, as he understands it. I am convinced that this is always the case. We have seen that Kaesemann denies on historical critical grounds all the miracles attributed to Jesus. On historical critical grounds Dodd affirms the Resurrection as historical and the probability of many other miracles of Jesus. Who is consistently employing the method and who is not? Of course, Kaesemann denies the possibility of miracles in principle, and Dodd does not. But even Dodd (and I suppose any historical critic if he is committed to the method at all) will have to say that *in principle* any recorded miracle could be shown by the Historical-Critical Method to be unauthentic. To me therefore Kaesemann is the conservative, that is, the consistent, practitioner of the method, not Dodd, who allows, or could be accused according to the method of allowing, his faith in a historical resurrection to affect his historic judgment.

One thing is clear as one observes the chaos of different and contradictory conclusions of those professing to be practitioners of the Historical-Critical Method: the method has no controls, as Dr. Franzmann used to say, no controls for a consistent use of the method, no controls for Biblical theology to arrive at pure doctrine. Historical critical methodology opens the door to every kind of aberration; and there is no way to close the door, except to reject the method as such. I cite a paper given by Prof. Martin Franzmann to the faculty at Concordia Seminary in the late fifties. "The historical-critical method cannot be considered as merely a theologically-neutral tool or technique of interpretation, comparable textual criticism, grammar, or lexicography. None of these latter undertakes to pass a value judgment on the historical substance of revelation; the historical-critical method does. The historical method assigns to the interpreter the capacity and the authority to distinguish between 'the facts which matter and the facts which don't.' According to the historical-critical method those facts which, in the interpreter's judgment, do not count may be marked by him as non-factual embellishments upon the facts or as merely symbolical-mythical enunciation of a theological truth. This is done even by conservative practitioners of the method again and again in cases where the records themselves are obviously intent upon recording plain, literal, historical fact and give no indication that they are speaking figuratively or symbolically . . . The fact must be faced that there is no really effective way of controlling or limiting the process of deciding between which facts count and which don't . . . Once the basic premise of the critical approach is conceded, one can no longer talk of pure doctrine; one can only talk of a more or less sane or successful application of the method; e.g., if a Lutheran theologian comes to the conviction that the Virgin Birth is one of the facts that doesn't count, who is going to convince him (and convict him), *on the premises of this method* [his underlining], that it is a fact that does count? And it should be obvious that, on the premises of the historical-critical method, the most vulnerable fact in the New Testament is the fact of the Resurrection."

Conclusions

ONE: I suppose the practitioners of the Historical-Critical Method, if pressed, would say that their results, even those "assured results" that become assumption-conclusions, are hypothetical. If this is so, and if the Historical-Critical Method is a valid method of exegesis, and if all doctrine in the church must be the result of exegesis, can those who hold to the priority of the Historical-Critical Method in our Seminary and Synod ever come to doctrinal conclusions as they carry out exegesis? Can a Lutheran Christian, can the Christian Church, using such a method ever arrive at sound doctrine (in the sense of "Our churches teach with unanimous consent" or "We believe, teach, and confess") from what can only at best be hypothetical conclusions of exegesis? If there is a way out of this dilemma for a Lutheran I have never heard it.

TWO: But as a matter of fact the method does yield doctrine—or at least affect doctrine in a negative sense. As a method of interpreting Scripture which purports to present doctrine, its results are bound to affect doctrine. For instance, the method tells us that the genre of Gen. 3 precludes the possibility that Adam and Eve were real persons and the Fall as presented there a real historic occurrence. Thus there is no specified historic cause for sin in the world, although there is a specified historic cause of our salvation from sin (Christ's work), no basis for holding to a state of integrity before the Fall or for propagated, imputed Erbsünde

after the Fall. In other words, no Biblical evidence for the doctrine of original sin as presented throughout our Confessions.

THREE: I am sure that colleagues in the Missouri Synod and other conrelatively conservative practitioners of the method would object that I am unnecessarily fearful of the use (and I mean the consistent use in terms of its own principles and goals) of the method because of the conclusions of liberal practitioners. Indeed, I am fearful. The results of the method have been disastrous for the Christian faith in case after case. But this is not because of the abuse of the method, but because of its *consistent use*. The conclusions of Kaesemann mentioned above are the result of the most consistent and careful use of the method. If Kaesemann, Conzelmann and countless other scholars have abused the method because of their wrong presuppositions, why have our Missourian practitioners not publicly shown that these scholars are not using the method as it should be used? Why? because they cannot. The *abuse* is the *method* itself.

FOUR: The Historical-Critical Method is simply not compatible with the Lutheran and Biblical doctrine that Scripture is the Word of God (verbal inspiration), God's revelation, and therefore as such is authoritative, divinely authoritative (there are no mistakes or errors there). Authority means that what Paul asserts God asserts (normative, canonical authority). Can one with such a position regarding Scripture use the Historical-Critical Method? I say no. And I have heard no scholar or theologian, liberal or conservative, outside Missouri Synod circles disagree. Yet I hear the Concordia Seminary administration and many of my colleagues trying to say yes. One can wear both hats. One can remain an authentic confessional Lutheran and use the Historical-Critical Method at the same time. But let us just look at a couple of Lutherans as they employ the method. Krister Stendahl and John Reumann conclude on the basis of historical critical methodology that Christ did not institute the Lord's Supper. Paul says He did (I Cor. 11:23). Here we have a flat, outright rejection of an assertion of Paul, a denial of the authority of Scripture at this point. We are told that the Historical-Critical Method wishes to find the *intention* of the text, not just a false surface meaning. But here our fellow Lutherans have gone beyond the intention of the text. They have denied the truthfulness and authority of the Biblical text.

FIVE: It has been said (*Concordia Seminary, Alumni Bulletin*, Summer 1970) often that at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis the Historical-Critical Method is used with Lutheran presuppositions. I deny that this can be done.

A) It cannot be done without denying the presuppositions inherent in the method itself and peculiar to it as well as any consistent use of the method.

B) I have never observed how so-called Lutheran presuppositions have informed the method in our circles or have even been used at all along with the method. The best we have seen is a protestation that we use Lutheran presuppositions.

C) What are we talking about when we speak of Lutheran presuppositions? The Law-Gospel dialectic? The unity or Scripture (doctrinal or Christological)? The divine origin of Scripture and its theology? Scripture's divine authority? Its inerrancy? All of these perhaps? All of these presuppositions are denied and therefore not used by practitioners of the Historical-Critical Method outside our Missouri Synod circles. Is there then to be some sort of denominational Lutheran or

Missouri Synod hermeneutic which somehow controls the method? If so, how do we establish it? From the Confessions? But the Confessions have their authority in the Scriptures which they interpret and summarize. Or do we establish our Lutheran hermeneutic from Scripture itself? Then surely our hermeneutic, our Lutheran presuppositions, must be harmonious with the conclusions of the Historical-Critical Method which our Missouri Synod proponents are using. But this is impossible, since the Historical-Critical Method in principle does not hold to a Lutheran hermeneutic. An honest and consistent practitioner of the Historical-Critical Method could only brand such Lutheran hermeneutical norms (which we might say are derived from Scripture, but he would not!) as wrong and harmful for getting at Scripture's intended meaning.

SIX: It has often been said at Concordia Seminary that the Historical-Critical Method is interested as its great priority in finding the intended sense of a passage or pericope of Scripture. What is meant by this?

A) Can the "intended" sense be different from what is written in the text itself under consideration? Put differently, can the intended meaning of a text be found in a pre-canonical source, and can this meaning be different from the canonical text? The Historical-Critical Method says yes. Holding to the authority or Scripture I say no.

B) Is the "intended" sense binding as the once and for all meaning of the text (*sensus literalis unus est*)? Does the intended sense have the authority of God today? Is a universal affirmation of Paul in its original intended sense an authoritative affirmation of God today, binding on us either to believe or obey (e.g., I Cor. 14:34; I Tim. 1:15; I Cor. 11:23)? The Historical-Critical Method says no. Holding to the authority of Scripture I say yes.

C) Can there be an "intended" sense with the possible force of doctrine within a single verse of Scripture, or even a clause or *obiter dictum* (e.g., John 10:35; I Tim. 2:13-14). Holding to the authority of Scripture I say yes. The Historical-Critical Method often says no, or ignores the question.

D) Is what is presupposed in a text also a part of the "intended" sense of a passage? For instance, the historicity of Adam and Eve in I Tim. 2:13-14 and Rom. 5:12ff; the Davidic authorship of Psalm 100 in Matt. 22:41ff.²¹ Holding to the authority of Scripture I say yes. The Historical-Critical Method says no.

SEVEN: To me the Historical-Critical Method is the great error of our day in Biblical exegesis and Christian theology, for it affects the whole of theology and the Gospel. To me it is shocking that this method, or methodology as some prefer to call it, has gained access and such large uncritical acceptance in the Missouri Synod. I believe that practically all our differences and problems in doctrine within our Synod stem from the use of this methodology.²² Only if we reject this method in terms of its presuppositions and goals and conclusions will we ever regain doctrinal unity, concord and peace in our church. Franzmann's statement, made more than ten years ago, is still appropriate and crucial (*ibid*):

Those who advocate and practice this method are required, therefore, to ask themselves whether such a method is compatible with their ordination vows, which bound them to Scripture in the absolute obedience of faith and pledged them to the Lutheran Confessions. They are called upon to ask themselves in all seriousness: Is an exegetical method which, e.g., questions (or rarifies) step for step the nexus, established by the New Testament itself,

between prophecy and fulfilment, between the Old Testament and the New, compatible with the absolute submission to the apostolic word which that word by its nature demands? Are the great twin facts of the Paraclete and the Apostolate being taken seriously? Can a method which deals as it does with the facts of the inspired record claim any connection with the absolute submission to the word which characterizes the Lutheran Confessions? It is not a question of coming into conflict with a peculiarly Missourian tradition or idiosyncrasy; the issue raised by the acceptance of this method involves a conflict with the bases of our Lutheran, Christian, existence.

Questions Which Must Be Asked of Any Lutheran Using or Defending the Historical-Critical Method.

THESE questions cry to be answered! [The following questions were submitted with the foregoing to the President and Board of Control of Concordia Seminary when I appeared before the Board to present my position concerning the Historical-Critical Method.]

1. Do you believe that all the sub-methods subsumed under the present umbrella of the Historical-Critical Method must be used by a Lutheran teacher (e.g., literary criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, content criticism)? Can a scholar at Concordia Seminary or anywhere use or claim to use the over-arching method, or methodology, of historical criticism as recognized and understood today, if he rejects any or all of these sub-methods?

2. Do you agree fully and without qualification or equivocation with the "Lutheran Stance Document" of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Missouri Synod,²³ when it speaks of "Necessary Controls" over the Historical-Critical Method? The document says, "The authoritative Word for the church today is the canonical Word, not precanonical sources, forms, or traditions—however useful the investigation of these possibilities may on occasion be for a clearer understanding of what the canonical text intends to say."

3. Do you believe in the inerrancy of Scripture as Walther and Pieper used the term (and our Synod in many resolutions)?²⁴ If so, do you believe such a position is compatible with the commitment to and use of the Historical-Critical Method?

4. Do you believe that the historical critical methodology can show a New Testament writer to be in error in his understanding or interpretation or application of an Old Testament text? For instance, does Matt. 22 misunderstand, misinterpret or misapply Ps. 110? Does Paul in Rom. 5 misunderstand, misinterpret or misapply Gen. 3? It is un-Lutheran to believe, teach and confess that Adam and Eve as spoken of in Scripture were real, historical human beings and that they fell into sin and that this *must* be the conclusion drawn from Gen. 3 in the light of the analogy of Scripture?

5. Do you believe that there are contrary and contradictory theologies (or presentations of the same event or saying) in Scripture? If you do not believe this, could you find *one* practitioner of the Historical-Critical Method outside the Missouri Synod to agree with you? Is it not true that a presupposition of the Historical-Critical Method is a denial of the analogy of Scripture and the unity of Scripture as these principles have been understood and applied by the Lutheran church and her Confessions? Do you believe that the historical critical methodology is compatible with the unity of Scripture and the analogy of Scripture as these

principles have been held and practiced by genuine Lutherans throughout the history of the Lutheran church and within the Missouri Synod? Do you believe that the use of the Historical-Critical Method can lead to unified doctrine in the church?

6. Dr. Roy Harrisville²⁵ quotes approvingly Ernst Kaesemann, who says that Jesus was not conscious of His own Messiahship. Harrisville maintains that this conclusion is perfectly compatible with our faith in Jesus as in fact the Messiah. Here is a result of the Historical-Critical Method at work. Would you agree with Harrisville that such a conclusion does not matter, does not affect the faith and may remain an open question at a Lutheran seminary? Hans Conzelmann²⁶ states, "It is questionable that Jesus regarded himself as the Messiah." May such a position be maintained at a Lutheran seminary, or must it be rejected? And rejected on exegetical grounds!

7. Historical critics assert that there are historical errors (error = mistake or deliberate alteration of facts because of a *Tendenz*) in Acts, Paul and the Gospels. Must a Lutheran historical critic insist that the New Testament is free of such errors?

8. Hans Conzelmann²⁷ denies on historical critical grounds the truth and historicity of Matt. 16:18 that Jesus founded the church. His position is that the passage is not an interpolation but a "misguided interpretation." May this conclusion be held by a Lutheran exegete? May it be taught as an option at a Lutheran seminary?

9. On historical critical grounds Conzelmann²⁸ concludes that "Spirit" (Holy Spirit) is seen in the New Testament on animistic and dynamic grounds, and therefore not personal. May such a conclusion be taught as an open question by a Lutheran exegete? *Can the Trinity be asserted on exegetical grounds, using the Historical-Critical Method?* If not, what can possibly lead us to the doctrine of the Trinity, if not an exegetical method (Historical-Critical Method)? If so, let the Lutheran exegete demonstrate how this can be done.

10. The Historical-Critical Method as it is used has concluded that the resurrection *idea* is confused.²⁹ 1) It is the same as the ascension and exaltation in some cases. 2) It is the rising of Christ for forty days. 3) The nature of the appearances is confused. The empty tomb is legendary. Can this conclusion so common to the practitioners of the method be an open question exegetically at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis?

11. The following are conclusions reached by means of the use of the Historical-Critical Method.

A) Jesus was not in fact tempted by the devil in the wilderness (See Matt. 4; Luke 4).

B) Jesus did not institute the Lord's Supper (See I Cor. 11:23).

C) Jesus did not raise Lazarus (John 11).

D) Jesus did not institute Baptism (See Matt. 28:19).

E) The New Testament does not teach anywhere as its intention the Virgin Birth of Jesus as a biological miracle (See Luke 1; Matt. 1).

F) None of the details connected with the baptism of Jesus are authentic (Matt. 3).

Would you: A) agree that such conclusions are open questions which one might hold on exegetical grounds and teach at Concordia Seminary (Note we are not asking a pastoral question here, how one might deal with a person holding to such views?) B) agree with any of these conclusions? C) hold that we must believe and teach the Virgin Birth of Jesus as an actual miracle, not just a theological construct or truth, even though it cannot with certainty be exegetically based? If so, what is the cognitive basis of your belief in the Virgin Birth?

12. Do you believe that Paul (I Cor. 14:34) forbids that women hold the pastoral office in the church? If so, do you believe that his prohibition holds today? If it does not hold, why not?

13. Do you agree with and teach according to Resolution 2-16 of the Denver Convention of the Missouri Synod ("To Affirm Historicity of the New Testament," *Proceedings*, p. 88) which says, "The apostolic proclamation of the event and the inscripturation of that proclamation took place under the impulsion and discipline of the Spirit of Truth. He glorifies the Christ through the witness of men. To attribute to the church a creatively formative part in the witness to the event is to fly in the face of all that is revealed concerning the activity of the Spirit; such an attribution introduces an intolerable synergism at a crucial point in the saving work of God."

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Footnotes

¹ See Commission on Theology and Church Relations "Stance" Document, *New York Convention Workbook*, pp. 395-6. A new distinction seems in process of being made in certain Missouri Synod circles today between method and methodology. In the past practitioners and non-practitioners, inside and outside Synod, have used the two terms interchangeably. Now we are being told or it is being implied that Lutherans and Missourians do not use *the* method as such. One cannot even speak of the Historical-Critical Method or even define it. No, genuine Lutherans, some tell us, will only employ the methodology of historical criticism. This new distinction will not find acceptance, because it is unclear and does not make sense. How can anyone employ methodology (in the sense of somehow modifying a method in use, adding Lutheran presuppositions to it or using only aspects of it) if he assumes that there is no known, understood, accepted and readily defined Historical-Critical Method?

² See Robert Smith, *The Historical Critical Method in the Light of Lutheran Theology*, paper delivered to the two Concordia Seminaries and the Council of Presidents, Nov. 10, 1969, p. 4 *passim*. Wolfhart Pannenberg completely contradicts such a thesis. See *Basic Questions in Theology*. Tr. George H. Kehm. London: SCM Press, 1970, I, 6ff.

³ *His Hidden Grace*. New York: Abington, 1965. p.22.

⁴ Gottfried Hornig, *Die Anfaenge der historisch-kritischen Theologie*, Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung, des Alten Testaments von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart*. Neukirchen: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsverein, 1956.

⁵ Cr 13, 573ff. Ps. *Phdr.* 270c; Arist. *En.* 1129a6; *Rol.* 1252a18; *Rh.* 1358a4.

⁶ Harrisville, p.22.

⁷ *The Authority of the Bible*, London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1955, pp.127-8.

⁸ *Creation and Redemption*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967. pp. 432, 433.

⁹ *ibid.* p. 90.

¹⁰ See Ralph Bohlmann, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968; Robert Preus, *Bibeln och de lutherska bekaennelseskriterna in Ditt ord aer sanning*, ed. Seth Erlandsson, Uppsala: Stiftelsen Biblicum, 1971, p. 214-233.

¹¹ *The Parables of Jesus*, Tr. S. H. Hooke. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957. pp. 24-26.

¹² *Gleischnisse und Lehrstuecke im Evangelium*. Frankfurt: Josef Knecht, 1963, I, 55-64.

¹³ See Sverre Aalen, "The Revolution of Christ and Scientific Research" in *The Springfielder* (Dec. 1970), p. 210: "A closer analysis shows that the so-called 'historical-critical' research in the form in which we know it today, where it concerns the more

important motifs of the contents, is a child of the modern time and has drawn its motifs from the spirit of the modern time. Its agreement with humanism or even with the existentialism of our time is obvious and perhaps denied by no one. That the decisive motifs with which this theology labors, cannot be relevant to the material, reveals itself among other things also in this, that the principal element is not sought in the words of the text, but as was stated above, *behind the words, even at times in direct contradiction to the text.*"

¹⁴ This is the judgment of Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, Tr. George H. Kehm. London: SCM Press, 1970, I, 196: "What is needed is precisely the historical quest, moving behind the kerygma in its various forms, into the public ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus himself in order in that way to obtain in the Christ-event itself a standard by means of which to judge the various witnesses to it, even those actually within the New Testament." Cf. p. 197, and *passim*.

¹⁵ For instance, Ernst Kaesemann, "Is the Gospel Objective" in *Essays On New Testament Themes*, Tr. W. J. Montague, Naperville, Ill.: A. R. Allenson, 1964, p. 48: "Over few subjects has there been such a bitter battle among the New Testament scholars of the last two centuries as over the miracle-stories of the Gospels. It was inevitable that in this sphere, as almost nowhere else, there should be a clash between super-naturalism and rationalism as manifestations respectively of traditional ecclesiastical orthodoxy and of the modern criticism of this orthodoxy and its tradition. We may say that today *the battle is over* [my emphasis], not perhaps as yet in the arena of church life, but certainly in the field of *theological science* [my emphasis]. It has ended in the defeat of the concept of miracle which has been traditional in the church; and this defeat has been brought about by attacks from two different quarters, between which there has been a constant and far from accidental interaction. First, miracle in general was offensive to the world view of the modern age and to the concept of nature and causality which was bound up with it. On the other side, historical research and the comparative study of religion led to the conclusion that the New Testament miracle stories (1) have been subject to a quite definite development, viz. that in the course of tradition they have been multiplied and heightened; (2) have countless analogies (from which they cannot be isolated) in classical antiquity; (3) are narrated according to a fixed form, so that it is possible to speak with accuracy of a technique of the miracle story." It is important to note that Kaesemann rejects all miracles recorded in the Gospels not merely on the basis of a modern world view which he thinks it is necessary to hold, but also on the historical analysis of the biblical data (*theological science*). His analysis which follows begins with Christ's resurrection.

¹⁶ Vincent Taylor *The Person of Christ in the New Testament Teaching*. London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., p. 6ff; 220 *passim*. C. H. Dodd, *History and the Gospel*. London: Nisbet, p. 83 *passim*. C. H. Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity*. London: The Macmillan Company, 1970.

¹⁷ John Charlot, *New Testament Disunity*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1970, p. 80.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, I, 45.

¹⁹ *ibid.* I, 7.

²⁰ *ibid.*, I, 194.

²¹ See "Lutheran Stance Document," in *New York Convention Workbook*, p. 401.

²² The seven problems pertaining to doctrine in Synod listed by our Synodical President in his *President's Report* before the Milwaukee Convention all spring directly or indirectly from the use of the Historical-Critical Method in Synod and schools (See *Milwaukee Proceedings*, pp. 54-55. See also the *Report of the Synodical President*, Sept. 1, 1972. The entire *Report* witnesses to the pervasiveness of the Historical-Critical Method in the teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

²³ See footnote 1.

²⁴ See for instance Walther's statement (*Concordia Theological*

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Monthly, 10—1939, p. 255): "Whoever thinks that he can find one error in Holy Scripture does not believe in Holy Scripture but in himself; for even if he accepted everything else as true, he would believe it not because Scripture says so but because it agrees with his reason or with his sentiments." Again Walther says (*LuW*, 34 [1888], p. 196): "If we conceded that only the least error could be present in the Bible, then it is up to man to separate the truth from the error. Man, then, is placed above the Scriptures, and Scripture ceases to be the source and norm of faith. Human reason is made the norm of truth, and Scripture sinks to the position of a *norma normata*. The least deviation from the old inspiration doctrine introduces a rationalistic germ into theology and contaminates the whole body of doctrine." Or consider Francis Pieper's statement in the *Brief Statement*, "We teach that the Holy Scriptures differ from all other books in the world in that they are the Word of God. They are the Word of God because the holy men of God who wrote the Scriptures wrote only that which the Holy Ghost communicated to them by inspiration, II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21. We teach also that the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is not a so-called 'theological deduction,' but that it is taught by direct statements of the Scriptures, II Tim. 3:16; John 10:35; Rom. 3:2; I Cor. 2:13. Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters, John 10:35." Cf. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950, I, 306, 307.

²⁵ *His Hidden Grace*, pp. 52-53.

²⁶ *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*. New York: Harper & Row, 1969, p. 32.

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 64.

²⁹ Conzelmann, p. 64.

Questions . . . (Continued from Page 7)

19. Do you teach that Moses struck a rock for water twice—first in Exod. 17:17, and the second time in Numbers 20:7-11?
20. Explain your understanding of the binding nature of the statement in Mark 12:37 regarding the ascription of Davidic authorship of Ps. 110.
21. What do you consider to be the theological significance of the effort to determine "literary genres?"
22. How would you explain to Sunday School teachers the statement of Deut. 8:4?

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Criticism . . . (Continued from Page 4)

2. *Criteria of the Historical-Critical Method* must be traced to their origins in the refusal of men to believe that God has revealed Himself to men on the terms and conditions reported in the Scriptures.

3. *Proponents of the Historical-Critical Method* must argue that divine truth can be established empirically, similar or analogous to the method used by natural scientists, so that Christian assurance regarding the truth, integrity, and authority of the Word of God is adduced experimentally, and not as a gift of the Holy Spirit conferred upon the believer when he hears the Word of God.

4. *The Biblical scholar* who insists upon the consistent application of the Historical-Critical Method remains caught in the web of causation—a most calamitous regression to the Aristotelian thesis regarding reality which the Ancient Christian church had conquered by the fourth century A.D.

5. *The existentialistic* or subjectivistic treatment of the texts of Scripture by the devotees of the Historical-Critical Method imposes the interpreter's phantasies and feelings upon the meaning of the text and displaces the faithful hearing of the Word of God.

6. *The Biblical scholar* who insists that the Historical-Critical Method must be used by the contemporary interpreter of the Bible also denies the clarity or perspicuity of the Scriptures.

7. *The theologian* who asserts that the Historical-Critical Method must be employed for Biblical interpretation in our seminaries violates the confessional position of Synod by his implicit denial of the priesthood of all believers. He denies that all Christian teaching is to be judged by all Christians who are asked to confess it. He limits a believer's competence and responsibility for the understanding of the Christian faith, and reserves a special place of theological privilege for the experts who know and accept the use of the Historical-Critical Method.

8. *Despite reservations* or objections expressed by some who use the Historical-Critical Method, it is quite proper to speak of "the historical-critical method" as natural scientists speak of "the scientific method." Procedures consistently applied or pursued constitute a method.

9. *The Historical-Critical Method* may be objectively studied, but it cannot be faithfully used for Christian interpretation.

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